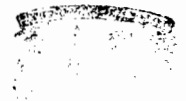


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THE CHILEAN BIBLIOGRAPHER
AND THE BIBLIOTECA NACIONAL

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Introduction

When the Biblioteca Nacional (National Library) was founded in Santiago by a government decree on August 19, 1813, few Chileans could have possibly foreseen the impact which this public institution would have in the progress of the country's national bibliography. After a period of Spanish occupation in Chile, the Biblioteca Nacional was reestablished by a decree of August 5, 1818, with the famous patriot and educator Manuel de Salas y Corbalán (1754-1841) as its librarian. The nucleus of the Biblioteca Nacional originally consisted of a few hundred books donated by private citizens and about eight thousand books and pamphlets which had belonged to the Universidad de San Felipe and the Jesuits. The Ley de Propiedad Intelectual (Law of Intellectual Property) of July 24, 1834 stimulated growth of the national library by requiring all printers to deposit two copies of every item published. At the same time, important private book collections were acquired by the Biblioteca Nacional, among them the almost ten thousand volume library of the statesman Mariano Egaña and the smaller book collections of José Miguel de la Barra, Benjamín Vicuña Mackenna, José Ignacio Eyzaguirre, Andrés Bello, and Diego Barros Arana.

The Biblioteca Nacional, responsible for acquiring and conserving Chile's national literary heritage, soon became the refuge and fountain of inspiration for those Chilean historians and bibliographers who set out to identify, organize and describe the nation's bibliographic riches. It is safe to conclude that without a national library, Chile would never have been in the forefront of bibliographic endeavors in Latin America. Many of the most outstanding staff members and administrators of the Biblioteca Nacional have been writers, historians, bibliographers or a combination of the three. It is the purpose of this essay to briefly highlight the work of some of the most distinguished Chilean bibliographers, all of whom worked at one time or another within the confines of this most important bibliographic center of the nation. An appendix to this paper summarizes Chile's retrospective and current national bibliography.

Ramón Briseño, 1814-1910

Of all the positions Ramón Briseño held in his busy academic life -- teacher, government official, writer, lawyer, director of the Biblioteca Nacional between 1864-1886 -- the one which most distinguished him was that of bibliographer. Although he had no special preparation for bibliographic investigations, a methodical temperament directed him toward the classification of his own library and the creation of various indexes. Foremost among his works was the first index to the Anales de la Universidad de Chile, which appeared in 1843 as the official publication of that institution and the oldest literary and scientific journal published in Latin America. In 1862, the University of Chile asked him to prepare a bibliography of Chilean literature

published between 1812 and 1876. This resulted in his Estadística bibliográfica de la literature chilena (2 volumes. Santiago de Chile, Imprenta Chilena, 1862-1879), which became Briseño's major achievement and also a source of much criticism. Chief among the compilation's failings was the fact that the titles of the various imprints were not copied exactly as they appeared on the title page, making accurate identification of several titles somewhat difficult. No matter how many defects are ascribed to this national bibliography, the fact remains that it became the first and most serious attempt in Chile to control the nation's intellectual resources. A facsimile of Briseño's work was published by the National Library in three volumes in 1965-1966, with a preliminary study by Guillermo Feliú Cruz and additions by Raúl Silva Castro.

Luis Montt, 1848-1909

Luis Montt, a lawyer and teacher, succeeded Ramón Briseño as head of the National Library in 1886. During his administration, which spanned twenty-three years, the holdings of that institution increased from about 60,000 to 150,000 volumes. His foresight as a bibliographer led to the publication, in 1886, of Chile's most outstanding and enduring national bibliography, the Anuario de la prensa chilena publicado por la Biblioteca Nacional. This annual checklist of imprints, periodicals and magazines included works published in the country, works by Chileans or about Chile printed abroad, and all works deposited with the registry of literary ownership (copyright) located at the Biblioteca Nacional. In 1904, Luis Montt published his Bibliografía chilena, 1780-1818 (2 volumes. Santiago de Chile, Imprenta Universitaria, 1904). The plan for this compilation was to cover the years 1780-1823. Volume one describes fourteen imprints published in Santiago between 1780 and 1807. Volume two comprises the period 1812-1817 and duplicates, to a great extent, material mentioned earlier by José Toribio Medina. Montt died in 1909 while in the process of completing volume three. Reprints of the completed pages he edited were issued in 1918 and 1921.

David Toro Melo

In an attempt to fill the bibliographic gap between Briseño's Estadística, a checklist which closes with the year 1876, and the 1886 appearance of the Anuario de la prensa chilena, David Toro Melo published his Catálogo de los impresos que vieron la luz pública en Chile desde 1877 hasta 1885 inclusive. (Santiago de Chile, Imprenta "Gutenberg," 1893). Toro Melo, an official of the National Library, was able to identify 2,453 imprints of a small edition which was almost totally destroyed by fire in 1894. The work, in which five copies survived, is considered to be a deficient bibliography, mainly because of its numerous omissions. Melo's list was integrated within the Anuario de la prensa chilena, 1877-1885 (Santiago de Chile, Biblioteca Nacional, 1952), edited by the well known journalist, literary critic and bibliographer, Raúl Silva Castro, who added a total of 1,817 new titles to Melo's compilation.

Emilio Vaisse, 1860-1935

Emilio Vaisse was a distinguished journalist and literary critic for El Mercurio, better known to his readers by his pseudonym, Omer Emeth -- two words of Greek and Hebrew extraction meaning "the truth I say." Vaisse organized

the first reference department at the Biblioteca Nacional in 1912 and founded La revista de bibliografía chilena y extranjera, which appeared under his able editorship during the years 1913-1918 and 1927-1928. Another of his contributions to Chilean bibliography was the Bibliografía general de Chile. Primera parte, Diccionario de autores y obras (Biobibliografía y bibliografía) (Santiago de Chile, Imprenta Universitaria, 1915), an attempt to combine a complete list of Chilean authors and their works with a complete list of foreign authors who had written about Chile between the years 1523 and 1914. Unfortunately, only one volume, published in 1915, was completed. It included the names beginning with A to Bustos.

Ramón A. Laval, 1862-1929

Having worked for many years in the Biblioteca Nacional in various capacities, including that of Acting Director, Ramón A. Laval was commissioned to study the organization of public libraries in the United States and Europe. He traveled extensively abroad in 1913, a trip which broadened Laval's bibliographic knowledge. Laval also found, in the book collection of Ramón Briseño, the oldest Chilean incunabulum entitled Modo de ganar el jubileo santo con las licencias necesarias en Santiago de Chile, año de 1776. His major contribution, however, to Chilean bibliography was his Bibliografía de bibliografías chilenas (Santiago de Chile, Imprenta Universitaria, 1915), a checklist of 358 titles which appeared as an appendix to Vaïsse's Bibliografía general de Chile. This marked the first time in Chile that such a compilation had been undertaken. Laval's work was continued by another distinguished employee of the Biblioteca Nacional, Herminia Elgueta de Ochsenius. Her Suplemento y adiciones a la bibliografía de bibliografías chilenas que publicó don Ramón A. Laval (Santiago de Chile, Biblioteca Nacional, 1930) added 219 titles to Laval's checklist, and although it was included first in the Revista chilena de bibliografía, it was also published separately in 1930. During my visit to Chile, in 1971, I discussed with several Chilean librarians and bibliographers the need to fill the gap from 1930 to-date. At least one person has been working sporadically on this project. Unfortunately, economic and manpower limitations have to date precluded the completion and thus the publication of such a vital compilation.

José Toribio Medina, 1852-1930

José Toribio Medina, a giant among bibliographers and heir to Diego Barbosa Machado, Nicolás Antonio, León Pinelo, Andrés González de Barcia and Henry Harrisse, described more than seventy thousand imprints and brought Chilean bibliographic investigation to its summit. He was a citizen of the world who unravelled the mysteries of archives in London, Paris, Seville, Valladolid, Cadiz, Simancas, Lima and Santiago de Chile. His contributions to Chile's national bibliography and worldwide bibliographic control of Latin America's intellectual resources are too vast to be discussed in-depth in this brief essay.¹ Mention must be made, however, of several of his classic compilations: the Bibliografía de la imprenta en Santiago de Chile, desde sus orígenes hasta febrero de 1817 (Santiago: el autor, 1891); -- followed posthumously by the Bibliografía de la imprenta en Santiago de Chile desde sus orígenes hasta febrero de 1817. Adiciones y ampliaciones (Santiago de Chile, Prensas de la Universidad de Chile, 1939); -- Biblioteca hispano-americana 1493-1810 (Santiago de Chile, el autor, 1898-1907), the first

six volumes published between 1898 and 1902 and the seventh and last in 1907.² Medina complemented this work with another, solely devoted to Chilean bibliography, entitled Biblioteca hispano-chilena 1523-1718 (3 volumes. Santiago de Chile, el autor, 1897-1899). Medina's greatest monument, along with his encyclopedic compilations, is his private book collection of nearly 22,000 volumes and hundreds of copied and original manuscripts which he gave to the Biblioteca Nacional. The national library also houses many of his personal belongings such as furniture, letters, bric-a-brac, paintings, photographs, and his famous Underwood typewriter.

Guillermo Feliú Cruz, 1900-1973

It was indeed a great honor for this author to meet Guillermo Feliú Cruz on several occasions, in Santiago, in 1971, and hear him reminisce about "the greatest bibliographer of Christianity."³ It is true that Feliú Cruz became Medina's closest collaborator, confidant, and loyal follower and always was considered heir apparent to Medina in bibliographic matters. But Feliú Cruz's interests branched into a kaleidoscopic array of tasks and positions, among them, as an educator, historian, curator of the José Toribio Medina Room in the Biblioteca Nacional, journalist, editor, bibliographer, and director of Chile's national library between 1960-1966.⁴ A bibliography of Feliú Cruz's prolific intellectual output is beyond the scope of this essay, yet it is imperative that such an undertaking should not be postponed indefinitely. Mention will be made here only of his monumental and relatively unknown Historia de las fuentes de la bibliografía chilena (5 volumes. Santiago de Chile, Biblioteca Nacional, 1966-). This work is undoubtedly his magnum opus. Seldom has the history of bibliography been treated with more faith, with more care and depth than in this collection of essays, a veritable bibliographer's guide to Chile's efforts to gather the sources which characterize its past and present. The series begins with the decrees by which the Kings of Spain hoped to collect and preserve all the documentation pertaining to the conquest and colonization of America. In succeeding chapters, it analyzes the work of Antonio de León Pinelo, the "father of American bibliography," in whose Epitome, 1629, documents dealing with the Kingdom of Chile are mentioned for the first time. The following chapters of Feliú Cruz's Historia portray, always in the form of essays and with extensive historical digressions, the lives and works of those who directly or indirectly contributed to the development of a Chilean bibliography between the sixteenth and twentieth centuries. The erudition and scope of this work makes it the only bio-bibliography of its kind in Latin America, and perhaps in the world.

Feliú Cruz is the last individual bibliographer in Chile whose work embraced a broad bibliographic province; such efforts had been brilliantly inaugurated with Ramón Briseño's Estadística bibliográfica de la literatura chilena and had reached their zenith with José Toribio Medina's works. The impact of twentieth century science and technology is rapidly changing Chile's social, political and educational perspective bringing with it a drastic transformation of the country's European inspired culture -- although the four hundred year old tradition is difficult to alter. The imposing, individually-researched bibliography and the Renaissance man are being replaced by the products of team effort and electronic equipment. There is however no alternative, for world-wide bibliography as a means of communication is expanding at a

terrifying speed, and these efforts will have to expand at a more rapid rate if they are to serve the needs of a growing national and international clientele of students and scholars.

While reviewing the labors of love of so many men and women devoted to the praiseworthy, yet underestimated, task of organizing the intellectual output of a nation, one cannot but wonder from where all this powerful desire and need to compile and disseminate knowledge emanates. It would seem that in order to spend hours, days, and even years forging an unbroken bibliographic chain, the bibliographer needs more than just money, time or inclination to find his task rewarding. Beyond a deep respect and thirst for knowledge, he must possess an enduring faith in his own contributions.

Retrospective and Current Chilean National Bibliography: A Summary.⁵

The reader interested in the chronological coverage of Chilean imprints published in the country since 1776 or published by Chileans abroad, in colonial imprints published in Europe or America by Spaniards or Chileans who lived in Chile, or in any other publication related to Chile since 1523 need not have recourse to all the following titles listed in order of publication date. The major Chilean bibliographies (consulted in the suggested order) will thoroughly cover the subject. They encompass the period 1523 to-date: (10) Medina; (8) Medina; (18) Medina; (22) Feliú Cruz; (6) Briseño; (21) Silva Castro; (7) Biblioteca Nacional; and (19) Zamorano y Caperán.

- (1) Alberdi, Juan Bautista. Legislación de la prensa en Chile, o sea, manual del escritor, del impresor y del jurado. Valparaíso: Imprenta del Mercurio, 1846.
- (2) Biblioteca Nacional. Catálogo por orden alfabético de los libros que contiene la Biblioteca Nacional. [Santiago, Chile]: 1854.
- (3) Amunátegui, Gregorio Víctor and Miguel Luis. "Catálogo de los libros y folletos impresos en Chile desde que se introdujo la prensa." Revista de ciencias y letras, I, no. 4 (Abril, 1857), 738-768.
- (4) Lindsay, Santiago. "Catálogo de las obras publicadas en Chile desde 1812 hasta el de 1858." Anuario estadístico de la república de Chile. [Santiago, Chile]: 1861.
- (5) Lindsay, Santiago. "Catálogo de los periódicos publicados en Chile, desde el año 1812 hasta el de 1858." Anuario estadístico de la república de Chile. [Santiago, Chile]: 1861.
- (6) Briseño, Ramón. Estadística bibliográfica de la literatura chilena. 2 vols. Santiago de Chile: Imprenta Chilena, 1862-1879.

- (7) Biblioteca Nacional. Anuario de la prensa chilena, 1886 to-date.
- (8) Medina, José Toribio. Bibliografía de la imprenta en Santiago de Chile desde sus orígenes hasta febrero de 1817. Santiago: el autor, 1891.
- (9) Toro Melo, David. Catálogo de los impresos que vieron la luz pública en Chile desde 1877 hasta 1885 inclusive. Santiago: Imprenta Gutenberg, 1893.
- (10) Medina, José Toribio. Biblioteca hispano-chilena, 1523-1817. 3 vols. Santiago de Chile: el autor, 1897-1899.
- (11) Biblioteca Nacional. Boletín de la Biblioteca Nacional de Santiago (Chile). Octubre 1901-Diciembre 1913; 1929-1937.
- (12) Montt, Luis. Bibliografía chilena, 1780-1818. 2 vols. Santiago de Chile: Imprenta Universitaria, 1904-1921.
- (13) Biblioteca Nacional. Revista de bibliografía chilena y extranjera. Enero 1913-Diciembre 1918; 1927-1929.
- (14) Biblioteca Nacional. Lista de las publicaciones periódicas. 1914-1918; 1920-1921; 1923-1938; 1952 to-date.
- (15) Vaïsse, Emilio. Bibliografía general de Chile. Primera parte. Diccionario de autores y obras (bio-bibliografía). Santiago de Chile: Imprenta Universitaria, 1915.
- (16) Laval, Ramón A. Bibliografía de bibliografías chilenas. Santiago de Chile: Imprenta Universitaria, 1915.
- (17) Elgueta de Ochsenius, Herminia. Suplemento y adiciones a la bibliografía de bibliografías chilenas que publicó don Ramón A. Laval. Santiago de Chile: Biblioteca Nacional, 1930.
- (18) Medina, José Toribio. Bibliografía de la imprenta en Santiago de Chile desde sus orígenes hasta febrero de 1817. Adiciones y ampliaciones. Santiago de Chile: Prensas de la Universidad de Chile, 1939.
- (19) Zamorano y Caperán, Fernando. Servicio bibliográfico chileno (Chilean Bibliographic News Service). Septiembre 1940 to-date. (Indexed in Bowker's Libros en venta. Suplemento 1967-1968).

- (20) Editorial del Pacífico, S.A. Revista bibliográfica chilena. Julio 1951-Septiembre 1957.
- (21) Silva Castro, Raúl. Anuario de la prensa chilena 1877-1885. Santiago de Chile: Biblioteca Nacional, 1952.
- (22) Feliú Cruz, Guillermo. Impresos chilenos 1776-1818. 2 vols. Santiago de Chile: Biblioteca Nacional, 1963.

1. More about José Toribio Medina the man and the bibliographer can be found in Juan R. Freudenthal's "Development and Current Status of Bibliographic Organization in Chile" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, The University of Michigan, 1972), pp. 113-121, 167, 172-173.
2. Four hundred and fifty-six titles were listed in Henry Harrisse's Biblioteca Americana Vestustisima. Medina increased that inventory to 7,337, without mentioning the editions cited in the form of added references.
3. Guillermo Feliú Cruz, Historia de las fuentes de la bibliografía chilena, I, xvii.
4. More about Guillermo Feliú Cruz the administrator and bibliographer can be found in Freudenthal's "Development and Current Status..." op. cit., pp. 121-126, 165, 174-175.
5. It will be useful to regard this appendix as a complement to the author's discussion of "Chilean National Bibliography: Origins and Progress." Libri, 22, no. 4:273-280 (1972).