



Bibliographic Control of Urdu Publications in India: The Role of Key Stakeholders

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: The study examines the status of bibliographic control of Urdu publications in India by analyzing the roles and contributions of key institutional stakeholders. It aims to assess the effectiveness of existing documentation mechanisms and identify structural, legal, and technical challenges affecting comprehensive bibliographic coverage in a multilingual national context.

Methodology: A qualitative and analytical research design was adopted. Key stakeholders were selected through purposive sampling based on authoritative sources such as the National Urdu Bibliography, the Indian National Bibliography, and major digital repositories. Data were collected from institutional archives, bibliographies, catalogues, government reports, organizational websites, and related documentary sources. The analysis focused on institutional functions, legal deposit compliance, cataloguing practices, metadata standards, and coordination mechanisms.

Findings: The study reveals that bibliographic control of Urdu publications in India remains fragmented despite the presence of a structured institutional framework. The National Library of India and the Central Reference Library play central roles in national bibliographic compilation, while universities, public libraries, state Urdu academies, and digital initiatives contribute significantly to documentation and access. However, inconsistent enforcement of legal deposit provisions, uneven institutional participation, limited coordination, and technical challenges related to script standardization hinder comprehensive coverage.

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***Implications:** The findings highlight the need for stronger legal enforcement, standardized metadata practices, enhanced digital infrastructure, and coordinated institutional collaboration. Establishing a centralized national union catalogue and strengthening state-level bibliographic initiatives are essential for ensuring sustainable preservation, improved scholarly access, and long-term development of Urdu bibliographic heritage in India.*

Keywords: Bibliographic Control, Bibliography, Urdu Publications, Urdu Bibliography, Bibliographic Agencies, Publishing Control, Urdu Academies

1. INTRODUCTION

Bibliographic control refers to the systematic organization and management of information about publications and other resources to ensure timely and effective access. This process involves the creation and use of various tools such as bibliographies, catalogues, indexes, abstracts, and databases in both print and electronic formats. Its primary purpose is to facilitate information retrieval and to safeguard cultural heritage. Libraries and information centres are responsible for maintaining and standardizing bibliographic records to ensure accessibility for both present and future use (Davaranah, 2001; Gorman, 2003).

According to IFLA, 2021, effective bibliographic control requires cooperation among libraries and related agencies in order to facilitate data sharing and reduce duplication. In multilingual nations such as India, extending bibliographic control across diverse languages, including culturally significant languages such as Urdu, is essential for ensuring equitable access to information and effective preservation (Hjørland, 2023).

In line with international bibliographic principles articulated by IFLA, national bibliographic control is regarded as a fundamental responsibility of the state and is generally vested in the national library. In the Indian context, this responsibility is implemented through a collaborative institutional framework in which the National Library of India functions as the legal deposit and custodial authority, while the Central Reference Library, Kolkata, undertakes the operational task of bibliographic compilation. This distinct yet cooperative arrangement reflects India's administrative approach to achieving comprehensive national bibliographic coverage.

2. NEED AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The present study seeks to ascertain the prevailing status of bibliographic control of Urdu publications in India. In an era marked by the rapid expansion of information across all fields of knowledge, effective bibliographic control has become increasingly essential, and this requirement applies equally to publications in the Urdu language. To address this need, a comprehensive survey was conducted across major academic and non-academic institutions, libraries, government and non-government organizations, and book publishers in order to examine the status of Urdu publications and their bibliographic control. To date, no systematic study specifically examining the bibliographic control of Urdu publications in India has been reported. The present approach is therefore innovative and is expected to be of significant value

to researchers working in the areas of bibliographic control, Urdu literature and language, language bibliographies, and related disciplines.

In essence, the major contributions of the present research include the identification of the roles played by prominent publishers, institutions, and libraries in the bibliographic control of Urdu publications, the examination of key problems and challenges affecting effective bibliographic control of Urdu publications, and the proposal of practical measures aimed at strengthening bibliographic control mechanisms for Urdu publications.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The present study is undertaken with the following objectives:

- To examine the status of bibliographic control of Urdu publications in India within the national bibliographic framework.
- To analyze the roles and contributions of key stakeholders, including the national bibliographic agency, academic institutions, public libraries, state Urdu academies, government and non-government organizations, digital platforms, and private publishers, in the documentation and organization of Urdu publications.
- To assess the use of bibliographic tools such as bibliographies, catalogues, indexes, and digital repositories for controlling Urdu publications.
- To identify the major problems and challenges affecting bibliographic control of Urdu publications, including legal deposit compliance, technical standardization, and institutional coordination.
- To propose measures for strengthening bibliographic control mechanisms for Urdu publications in India through improved legal enforcement, standardization practices, and collaborative frameworks.

4. RESEARCH METHODS

The present study employs a qualitative and analytical approach to examine how Urdu publications in India are documented and managed. This approach is adopted because the study focuses on institutional practices, cataloguing tools, legal frameworks, and documentary evidence rather than on statistical measurement. The study focuses on understanding existing methods of bibliographic documentation, the extent of legal compliance, and the patterns of coordination among various stakeholders involved in the management of Urdu publications.

Specific institutions and organizations are deliberately selected based on their active involvement in the publication, preservation, and cataloguing of Urdu literature. The selection is guided by authoritative and reliable sources such as *Qaumi Kitabiyat* (National Urdu Bibliography), the Indian National Bibliography compiled by the Central Reference Library, Kolkata, and the digital platform of the Rekhta Foundation. Reliance on these sources ensures the inclusion of organizations with demonstrable and sustained contributions to the documentation and organization of Urdu materials. In the case of the private publishing sector, a single representative publisher is selected as an information-rich case to facilitate in-depth qualitative analysis rather than sector-wide generalization.

Data are collected from a wide range of documentary and institutional sources, including published bibliographies, catalogues, indexes, official reports, institutional websites, digital

repositories, and historical records. Where necessary, supplementary information is obtained through personal visits, telephonic communication, and examination of both print and electronic documents available within the selected institutions.

The collected data are subjected to detailed descriptive and analytical examination. Institutional contributions are assessed in terms of bibliographic outputs such as bibliographies, catalogues, indexes, and digital databases, as well as compliance with legal deposit provisions under the Delivery of Books and Newspapers (Public Libraries) Act, 1954. A comparative analytical approach is employed to identify variations in cataloguing practices across different categories of stakeholders.

To ensure accuracy and reliability, the findings are cross-verified using multiple sources, including national bibliographic records, institutional publications, and official documentation. Given the qualitative nature of the study, analytical rigor is achieved through careful interpretation and triangulation of data rather than through statistical generalization.

5. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The scope of the study covers selected prominent academic institutions, libraries, and publishers identified through the purposive sampling technique. The primary basis for the selection of publishers and for the collection of information on Urdu bibliographies, catalogues, and indexes for analysing the status of bibliographic control of Urdu publications in India is the Indian National Bibliography and Qaumi Kitabiyat (National Urdu Bibliography). Several colleges and universities, public and oriental libraries, state Urdu academies, as well as government and non-government organizations, are engaged in Urdu publishing and its bibliographic control. From among these, the present study selects specific institutions, organizations, libraries, and publishers, which are categorized as follows.

5.1. National Bibliographic Agency

International guidelines articulated by the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions emphasize that each nation bears primary responsibility for the bibliographic control of its published output. This responsibility includes the preparation of a comprehensive national bibliography, using standardized cataloguing practices to ensure international visibility, discoverability, and accessibility. Conventionally, a country's national library is designated as the principal national bibliographic agency.

In the Indian context, the National Library of India functions as the legal deposit institution under the Delivery of Books and Newspapers (Public Libraries) Act, 1954 and is entrusted with the collection and preservation of publications produced within the country. However, the operational responsibility for compiling and issuing the Indian National Bibliography is assigned to the Central Reference Library, which is also located in Kolkata. The Central Reference Library operates under the Ministry of Culture, Government of India and is institutionally situated within the campus of the National Library of India.

The Central Reference Library performs the specialized task of compiling the Indian National Bibliography and language-wise national bibliographies, including those for Urdu. This work is based on publications received by the National Library of India through legal deposit, as well as through gifted and other acquired materials. The Indian National Bibliography is published by the Language Department, Government of Uttar Pradesh, Lucknow.

Within this institutional arrangement, the Central Reference Library cannot be regarded as an independent national bibliographic agency in the strict international sense. Rather, it functions as a specialized technical unit that supports the national bibliographic responsibilities of the National Library of India. This collaborative framework reflects India's distinctive administrative model of bibliographic control, in which custodial responsibility and bibliographic compilation are institutionally differentiated yet collectively ensure comprehensive national bibliographic coverage.

5.2. Academic Institutions

Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, is widely recognized for its Maulana Azad Library, which houses an extensive Oriental Division comprising over 100,000 Urdu volumes alongside significant Persian and Arabic collections. The library employs advanced library management software (Libsys 7.0), follows AACR-2 cataloguing rules, and applies the Dewey Decimal Classification scheme for its Urdu holdings. Its Online Public Access Catalogue facilitates academic accessibility and contributes to bibliographic control through detailed catalogue records and standardized metadata. The Maulana Azad Library also provides a "Bibliography on Demand" service to its users, initiated and supported by the Central Reference Library, Kolkata.

Maulana Azad National Urdu University, Hyderabad, is uniquely dedicated to the promotion of the Urdu language. Its central library maintains both print and digital collections and hosts an institutional DSpace repository that digitizes valuable Urdu materials, including archival newspapers such as *Al-Hilal* and faculty publications. These initiatives enhance bibliographic accessibility by generating structured digital metadata that supports scholarly research and global dissemination.

The Dr. Zakir Husain Library at Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi, holds a rich collection of 2,237 manuscripts in Urdu, Persian, and Arabic, dating from the fourteenth to the twentieth centuries. Its Urdu textbook and reference collections comprise more than 11,000 volumes. The library employs modern cataloguing systems, thereby supporting researchers and students through systematic bibliographic control of a substantial body of Urdu literature.

5.3. Public Libraries

The National Library of India, Kolkata, functions as a major depository library responsible for collecting and preserving Urdu publications received under legal deposit provisions. It supports public access and works in coordination with the Central Reference Library to maintain and manage bibliographic records, thereby enriching national bibliographic databases.

Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library, Patna, holds more than 21,000 manuscripts and approximately 250,000 printed texts, a substantial portion of which are in Urdu. As a government-funded institution of national importance, it plays a significant role in cataloguing and digitizing rare Urdu manuscripts, contributing to both heritage preservation and the development of bibliographic resources.

Rampur Raza Library, Rampur, Uttar Pradesh, is a government-managed institution renowned for its Indo-Islamic collections. As a legal deposit repository, it preserves rare Urdu and Persian manuscripts. The library actively publishes catalogues, undertakes computerization initiatives, and engages in conservation activities, thereby strengthening regional bibliographic control of

Urdu heritage materials.

5.4. State Urdu Academies

India currently has eighteen state-level Urdu academies located across various states, including Uttarakhand, Punjab, Haryana, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala. These academies possess the institutional capacity to contribute to the organization and documentation of Urdu publications, primarily through the preparation of regional bibliographies and the maintenance of publication inventories.

However, the extent of their engagement in bibliographic control varies considerably. Several academies, notably those in Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Delhi, and Haryana, demonstrate relatively higher levels of initiative and play a more prominent role in monitoring and documenting published works. If all state Urdu academies were to adopt comprehensive and systematic bibliographic practices, a more efficient, coordinated, and regionally balanced framework for the bibliographic control of Urdu publications could be achieved.

The reference to resource limitations in the context of state Urdu academies is based on documentary evidence and institutional reports and reflects constraints related to staffing capacity, technical infrastructure, and administrative prioritization rather than a detailed financial or budgetary analysis of individual academies.

5.5. Government and Non-Government organizations

The National Council for Promotion of Urdu Language (NCPUL), headquartered in New Delhi under the Ministry of Education, Government of India, functions as the principal governmental body for the promotion of the Urdu language. In addition to supporting Urdu education and publishing activities, the Council undertakes bibliographic initiatives aimed at enhancing the dissemination, visibility, and systematic cataloguing of Urdu publications across the country. Notable among these efforts is *Wazahati Kitabiyat*, an annotated Urdu bibliography of social science publications.

Rekhta Foundation, complementing these efforts, operates as a non-profit organization dedicated to the digitization and preservation of Urdu literature. With a substantial collection of over 322,415 digitized books and an estimated 54 million pages, Rekhta offers the largest online repository of Urdu literary works. Its user-oriented digital platform, supported by detailed descriptive metadata, significantly enhances the discoverability of Urdu resources and extends their accessibility to a global audience.

5.6. Private Publishing Industry

While many private publishers are engaged in Urdu book publishing, Educational Publishing House, based in Delhi, currently represents a significant contributor to the production of Urdu educational literature. Its publications, which include school textbooks and language-learning materials, are regularly acquired by libraries and archival institutions, thereby integrating commercial publishing outputs into national bibliographic control systems. Many of these works are also digitally accessible through established platforms, facilitating authenticated source availability for cataloguing and wider public access.

The selection of Educational Publishing House for the present study is based on the purposive sampling technique and is informed by its consistent and substantial representation in *Qaumi Kitabiyat* (National Urdu Bibliography). Documentary evidence indicates that this publisher has made sustained contributions to Urdu educational publishing over an extended period, rendering it an information-rich case suitable for qualitative analysis. Although several other private publishers remain active within the Urdu publishing sector, a comprehensive comparative assessment of all private publishers lies beyond the defined scope of this study and is identified as a potential area for future research.

The present study is limited to the examination of institutional mechanisms, bibliographic tools, and organizational practices involved in the bibliographic control of Urdu publications. It does not assess user behavior, information-seeking patterns, or levels of user satisfaction with existing bibliographic systems. Consequently, the evaluation of researcher and student perspectives, including issues of usability and accessibility of bibliographic tools, falls outside the scope of the current investigation.

Furthermore, the study is deliberately confined to Urdu publications produced in India in order to provide a focused, language-specific analysis of bibliographic control mechanisms. Comparative assessment with other Indian languages, such as Hindi, Bengali, or Tamil, has not been undertaken, as it extends beyond the objectives of the present research. This language-specific focus enables an in-depth examination of institutional practices and challenges unique to Urdu bibliographic control.

6. RESULT AND INTERPRETATION

An analysis of the bibliographic control of Urdu publications in India reveals considerable variation in the roles and contributions of different stakeholder groups. The findings are derived from an examination of bibliographic outputs, institutional records, and the implementation of legal deposit provisions across national agencies, academic institutions, public libraries, state-level Urdu academies, government and non-government organizations, digital platforms, and private publishers.

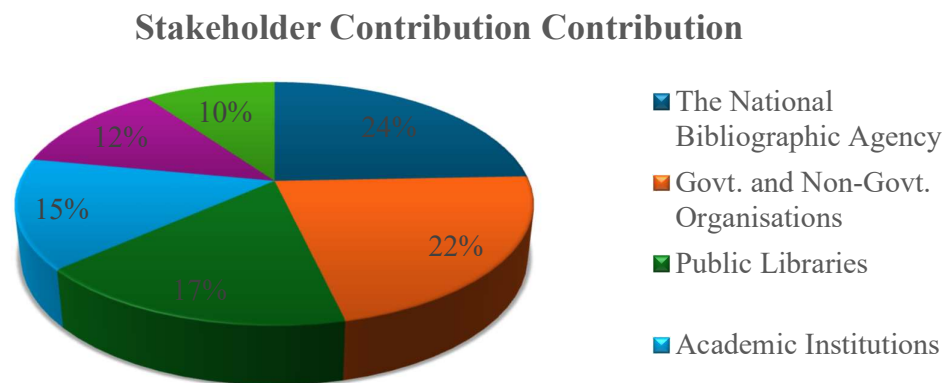


Figure 1. *Contribution-based stakeholder roles in bibliographic control of Urdu publications in India.*

Figure 1 presents a comparative overview of stakeholder contributions to the documentation and organization of Urdu publications in India. The National Library of India accounts for 24.4 percent of recorded bibliographic activity, followed by government and non-government organizations at 22 percent, public libraries at 17.1 percent, and academic institutions at 14.6 percent. State-level Urdu academies contribute 12.2 percent, while private publishers account for the smallest share at 9.8 percent.

This distribution reflects the functional roles performed by different stakeholders within the bibliographic ecosystem. The relatively higher contribution of the national bibliographic agency corresponds to the Central Reference Library's operational role in bibliographic compilation under the legal deposit framework, whereas other stakeholders contribute through preservation, cataloguing, digitization, and access provision. The comparatively lower contribution of private publishers indicates limited compliance with legal deposit requirements and the absence of standardized cataloguing practices.

7. Conclusion, Findings and Suggestions

The bibliographic control of Urdu publications in India constitutes a complex yet essential knowledge infrastructure supported by multiple institutional stakeholders. The findings of the study indicate that although a functional framework exists comprising the National Library of India, the Central Reference Library, universities, public libraries, state Urdu academies, and digital platforms, the overall system remains fragmented and insufficiently coordinated.

The study confirms that responsibility for the documentation and preservation of Urdu publications is institutionally shared. The National Library of India functions as the statutory legal deposit authority, while the Central Reference Library undertakes the operational task of bibliographic compilation. Academic institutions and public libraries contribute substantially through cataloguing, preservation, and access services. In addition, digital initiatives such as Rekhta have significantly enhanced the visibility and global accessibility of Urdu publications. However, the participation of private publishers and several state Urdu academies remain limited, resulting in noticeable gaps in the national bibliographic record of Urdu publications.

Key challenges identified include weak enforcement of legal deposit provisions, the absence of standardized metadata practices, technical difficulties arising from script variations between Nastaliq and Naskh, and the lack of a centralized national union catalogue for Urdu publications. Resource constraints and uneven institutional capacity further impede systematic documentation efforts, particularly at the regional level. It is important to clarify that observations regarding resource limitations are derived from qualitative institutional documentation and publicly available reports and do not constitute a financial assessment or audit of individual state Urdu academies.

While the study provides a comprehensive institutional-level analysis of the management of Urdu publications, it does not incorporate direct user perspectives. Future research may therefore undertake user-centered studies involving scholars, students, and researchers to evaluate the usability, discoverability, and effectiveness of existing bibliographic tools for Urdu publications. Additionally, comparative investigations across other Indian languages may help determine whether the challenges identified are specific to Urdu or reflect broader national issues in bibliographic control. References to legal deposit compliance in the present study are based on qualitative assessment of institutional records rather than exhaustive statistical enumeration.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

Following the conclusions of the study, several key recommendations are proposed to strengthen the organization, documentation, and accessibility of Urdu publications in India:

- **Modernize enforcement of the Delivery of Books Act:** Enforcement mechanisms under the Delivery of Books and Newspapers (Public Libraries) Act, 1954 should be strengthened and digitized. This may include the introduction of automated reporting systems and improved frameworks for monitoring compliance.
- **Establish a national Urdu union catalogue:** A centralized national catalogue for Urdu publications should be developed by integrating bibliographic data from key institutions such as the Central Reference Library, the National Council for Promotion of Urdu Language, the Rekhta Foundation, and major academic and public libraries.
- **Implement standardized cataloguing practices:** Common encoding and cataloguing standards, particularly Unicode-based Nastaliq, should be adopted to ensure consistency, interoperability, and seamless integration of bibliographic records across different library and information systems.
- **Strengthen professional training initiatives:** Specialized training programs should be organized through the National Council for Promotion of Urdu Language to equip cataloguers, librarians, archivists, and metadata managers with standardized practices and technical skills related to Urdu bibliographic control.
- **Support state-level Urdu academies:** Sustained government funding and appropriate technical infrastructure should be provided to state Urdu academies to enable the systematic compilation, updating, and dissemination of regional bibliographic resources.
- **Promote public-private collaboration:** Collaborative initiatives between public institutions and private organizations should be encouraged to advance digitization, preservation, and metadata-sharing efforts for both heritage and contemporary Urdu publications.

The study highlights the current status, achievements, and limitations of bibliographic control of Urdu publications in India. While institutions such as the Central Reference Library, universities, public libraries, state Urdu academies, and digital platforms make significant contributions, gaps persist in legal deposit compliance, cataloguing standardization, and national-level integration. The findings indicate a fragmented bibliographic ecosystem in which valuable resources exist but lack centralized coordination and accessibility. Strengthening legal mechanisms, adopting standardized metadata practices, enhancing digital infrastructure, and promoting institutional collaboration are essential steps toward ensuring improved preservation, enhanced scholarly access, and the long-term sustainability of Urdu bibliographic heritage in India.

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