8.2. Name authority records and rules

Overview

The module on name authority control concepts and problems addresses intellectual challenges of creating authorized name headings. This module addresses the practical side of creating a name authority file for the Information Organization Project (IOP). It includes guidelines and examples to help you write rules for establishing authorized name headings.

Record structure

Authority files can take many shapes, from a simple list of authorized terms to a database of name authority records. Let's begin by looking at a couple of examples of library name authority records.

Library name authority records

Librarians were creating name authority records long before online catalogs. The following is an example of a print record.

"Van Buren, Ariane" is the **authorized form** of the name. The two names at the bottom preceded by "x" are **variant forms** of the name. Where did the cataloger find the variants? The middle section of the card ("Work cat.:") contains the cataloger's notes about **sources**. The book used as a basis for the authority work was titled *Nuclear or not?* This book listed the author's name one way on the title page ("t.p.") and another way on the book jacket ("jkt."). Following Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules, rev. 2 ("AACR2," referenced at top right), the cataloger did the necessary authority work and possibly some research (e.g., contacting the place where this person worked to double-check on spelling, etc.) before arriving at the authorized form. The other record entry is the Library of Congress Authority File ("LCAF") **record number**
Let's take a look at another example. The following is a display from an online name authority record.

This record has the same basic information: **authorized form** of the name ("HEADING"), **variant forms** ("Used For/See From"), cataloger's notes about **sources** ("Found In"), and **record number** ("LC Control Number"). As you can see in the notes, the earlier names were established from books written by this author and the current name by a call to the publisher to confirm that this is a new name for the same person based on change of marital status.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LC Control Number: 92117843</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cancel/Invalid LCCN: 78090393</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEADING: McCook, Kathleen de la Peña</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used For/See From: Heim, Kathleen M. De la Peña, Kathleen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Found In: Library support staff, 1993: CIP t.p. Kathleen de la Peña McCook) Her Opportunities in library and information science careers, 1996: CIP t.p. (Kathleen de la Peña McCook) Phone call to pub., June 5, 1996: (author's new married name is McCook; previous ed. of Opportunities... written under previous married name, Heim; maiden name is De la Peña)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In general, a name authority record should have the following components:

- Authorized name
- Variant forms of the name
- Notes concerning the work of establishing the authorized form

In addition, good database design prescribes that each record should have a unique record number and a date of creation or modification.

**IOP name authority record**

For the IOP, you will implement a name authority file in the form of paper document (Appendix F), separate from the main database you created earlier. In keeping with the examples above, we have predetermined the fields for your name authority records:

- AuthorizedName
- VariantNames
- SourcesUsed

Appendix F contains two parts: input rules, and sample records. Sound familiar? These parts are comparable to Appendices C, and G for the main database. Based on your previous experience, the examples above, and a little thinking on your part, you should find the tasks for Appendix F in the IOP assignment to be relatively easy. The greatest challenge is likely to be setting up the rules for establishing authorized name headings, for which we provide guidelines below.
Guidelines for writing rules

These guidelines for Appendix F Content and Input Rules are handled the same way as in Appendix C.

AuthorizedName

The rules for this field are all-important because they set the standard for establishing the authorized form of a name. The module on name authority concepts and problems summarizes many of the reasons for exerting name authority control and may give you some ideas. Here are major decision points.

Choice of name

- The authorized name for people or organizations is typically the most recent.
- For a person with multiple bibliographic identities, you might use the predominant or more widely known name, even if this is a pseudonym.
- Personal titles (e.g., "Dr.") and credentials (e.g., "M.D.") are usually omitted, but may be appropriate for some systems.
- The authorized name for an organization or company is typically the most common, whether written out or abbreviated (acronym).
- Qualifying data (birth date, death date, title) may be added if necessary for uniqueness: to distinguish between two people or organizations.

Choice of form of name

- For personal names, the form used by the person in his/her country of residence is typically authorized. If the name is transliterated from another script, the most common Anglicized version is used.
- Most systems use the most commonly found form of a name, but if in doubt, use the fullest form. For corporate names, this decision includes whether to use "Company" vs. "Co." etc.
- Use the predominant spelling and punctuation.

Choice of entry element

- Personal names are usually inverted (last name first) to facilitate recognition and searching, although this may vary depending on the country or culture. You may choose to enter names in natural order (first name first) if appropriate for your system and users. Whatever your choice, be consistent: do not invert some authorized names and not others.
- Organization or corporate names typically are entered in natural order.
VariantNames

- Rules for variant names may state what constitutes a variant name or form of a name (i.e., whether pseudonym or real name is considered the variant).
- The rules may or may not stipulate special formatting (inverted order, capitalization, etc.).
- The rules must cover multiple entries.

SourcesUsed

- The source for establishing the authorized name should itself be the most authoritative source available. The rules may stipulate which source (or sources, in order) to consult. Common sources include:
  - Library of Congress Name Authorities
  - Formal directory (e.g., corporation, organization, professional field)
  - Subject-area database (e.g., humanities index in library, major movie database on Web)
- The rules must state the citation format. This may range from a full bibliographic citation to just title and year of publication or access.
- The source used is never the object itself

Rules examples (rules for your system and information objects may be quite different)

**Field name:** AuthorizedName  
**Semantics:** The one form of a name that is authorized for use in the database  
**Input Rules:** Choose the most commonly used and recent name. If personal name is pseudonym, enter person's real name in this field and enter pseudonym in VariantNames field. If name has changed, enter new name in this field and move previous name to VariantNames field. Enter personal name as last name, comma, first name, middle initial (if any) with period. Spell it exactly as in source, using normal capitalization (not all caps). Omit personal title, such as "Dr.," and credential, such as "M.D." Enter corporate name as acronym if that is common usage, with capitalization as used by the corporation. If name is written out, enter words in natural order (not inverted), with normal capitalization and punctuation, and with "Inc.," "Co.," etc. abbreviated.  
**Example:** King, Stephen; Sci Fix, Inc.

**Field Name:** VariantNames  
**Semantics:** Alternative names or forms of the authorized name  
**Input Rules:** Variant may include pseudonym, previous name, or different spelling or fullness (e.g., full middle name). Spell name exactly as found, with normal capitalization (not all caps) and in normal order (not inverted). Enter new variants as they are found.  
**Example:** Richard Bachman; Sci Fix
**Field Name:** SourcesUsed  
**Semantics:** Reference for formal source of authorized name  
**Input Rules:** Enter complete title, using title-style capitalization. Follow title with comma and four-digit year of publication or access.  
**Example:** Library of Congress Name Authority File, accessed 2004; Sci Fix, Inc. Annual Report 2003

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**Project Alert!** When creating Appendix F, Name Authority File:

- Remember that more than one name field in the main database can be under control of this one name authority file.
- Write distinct rules for both personal names and organization names if both appear in name fields in the main database.
- In name authority rules examples and sample records, use names from your sample objects. If your system has both personal and organization names, create at least one example of each.
- If no variant forms of the name appear on an object, you can invent variant names.
- Omit qualifying data (birth date, death date, title) unless you feel it's really necessary.
- Create Ten sample name authority records—not records for all names in your main database.
- All authorized names in Appendix F should appear somewhere in Appendix G sample records for the main database. In other words, follow your own rules.

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**Summary**

The reason we do authority control is to bring consistency to data in selected access points. Done right, name authority control may result in a main database record field containing an authorized name that is entirely different from the name in the information object. The user who searches the authorized name, however, is much more likely to retrieve all the relevant records than the searcher who has to guess at every variant name. Name authority control is one major way in which information organization can help users. In the IOP, you demonstrate your understanding of its principles by creating and applying a simple name authority control system.