

SERIES AUTHORITY RECORD TASK GROUP FINAL REPORT

7 September, 1994

INTRODUCTION

The Series Authority Record Task Group is charged to define the content and functional uses of series authority records in the national authority file, now known as the Anglo-American Authority File.

If we were to start over again with a clean slate, would we invent series authority records? After all, bibliographic records convey much of the data that is carried redundantly in a series authority record (SAR). When the options are closely examined, SARs perform a valuable function. While much of the information sought from SARs can be deduced from bibliographic records (e.g. the authorized form of heading, treatment practice, place, and issuing body), SARs are superior in conveying the information in that they gather data in a single spot, thereby supporting "one-search" lookup. Additionally, data in SARs are arranged in standard locations, making the lookup efficient in people time. Finally, SARs support automated processing that would not be possible or feasible without them. This report presents justifications for these statements, and suggests ways in which series authority work at the national/international level could be made more efficient while retaining what is valuable.

RESEARCH ON SERIES

In reacting to the LC Series Proposal, as well as to the functions survey posted by this Task Group, members of the library community made numerous statements about the high value of series authority records and series authority work. However, the Task Group was not able to find empirical confirmation of such statements in the published literature. It is apparent that although the LC Series Report has stimulated some local research in recent months, few meaningful studies of series use and value have been carried out up to now.

It can be very difficult to draw meaningful conclusions from available transaction log data, because series search transactions are often conflated with those for titles. Where it is possible to draw conclusions, it is evident that series searches constitute a modest proportion of overall searches; relative to other types of headings, the importance of series is less than that of author headings or subjects *by this measure*.

However, it seems that series have bibliographic significance which is not measurable in terms of

transactions alone. For example, public service librarians from a wide range of disciplines reported in response to the LC Series Report and to this Task Group's survey that publications, especially abstracts and indexes, often cite series titles as if they were journal titles, or provide only a series title, and maybe an author or date or number, to identify a bibliographic item.

This Task Group's literature search shows that a large amount of staff time is being expended on series authority control. The most important activity at present appears to be migrating the tools and procedures that support series authority control from a manual to an online environment. The results of the literature search are presented in Appendix I, part A of this report.

Local research performed in response to the LC Series Report and the work of this Task Group has addressed several important issues:

- a) the frequency of series searches in OPACs;
- b) the effects of controlling only numbered series on the volume of series authority work to be performed;
- c) the effects of giving access to series only through 4xx fields;
- d) the number of times a library's treatment decision varies from that found on an SAR;
- e) the adequacy of keyword searching as a substitute for authority control.

The Task Group gratefully acknowledges the assistance of Arnold Wajenberg (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign); David Gleim (University of South Florida--Tampa); Judith Hopkins (SUNY Buffalo); Sherry Kelley, Brian Schottlaender, and Barbara Rapoport (UCLA); and Holly Schmidt (BNA) in providing us with current data from their systems, and/or information about current research which supports the Task Group's work. Information about several local research projects is summarized in Appendix I, Part B of this report.

ASSUMPTIONS

The work of this Task Group has been informed by a number of assumptions which should be kept in mind when considering the group's conclusions and recommendations.

GENERAL ASSUMPTIONS

1. All libraries are looking for the most efficient way to do work, because of budget problems, shortages of staff, and lack of expertise to deal with specific formats.
2. The Anglo-American Authority File, which includes contributions from LC and many other libraries, is a file

administered by LC, which exists in mirrored copies at LC and at each bibliographic utility.

3. The Anglo-American Authority File supports multiple functions, including provision of identifying and reference information about headings, definition of syndetic structure, and authorization of forms of headings that will collocate in bibliographic files. It also serves as a source of records that can be used for machine validation and manipulation of headings in bibliographic records.
4. The thrust toward more cooperation will continue.
5. The national environment is electronic, not manual.
6. Authority records function as components of a multi-layered national system of "bibliographic control," with agreed-upon standards and conventions, programs, online catalogs (both local and external), resource files, record communication mechanisms, and bibliographic services. This national system is meant to support cost-effective processing. It is this system, in which headings are "controlled" by authority records, to which this report refers.
7. For any national program, the closer the national product is to what we would do locally in the first place, the more attractive participation will be.

SERIES-SPECIFIC ASSUMPTIONS

8. The primary purpose of a public catalog is to provide access to information sources. SARs provide standardized forms of headings and necessary cross-references to aid in finding bibliographic entities which would otherwise be lost.
9. As is evident in some parts of this report, there is a tension between local needs and national/international needs which is not easily resolved. However, there would be no national records if there were no local reasons for them. It is tempting, but very difficult, to separate completely local and national uses of SARs, because the series environment is inherently complicated.
10. Cognizant of the PCC mission to support cataloging "more, better, faster, and cheaper," this Task Group should define the set of data elements required in SARs in the Anglo-American Authority file to support in a cost-effective manner the functional uses the group has identified.
11. The national level series authority record should be dynamic and unique.

12. This series authority record should include only information which needs to be conveyed to users of SARs; give the information succinctly, and not give extraneous information routinely. It must include the key matching fields to be defined by the Foreign MARC Coalition members for use when loading foreign MARC records (TG 6, recommendation 2.5).

13. In the near future SARs routinely will be created by machines with some human intervention to finish them. Machine validation and manipulation will become commonplace and essential to authority work.

14. Libraries can be expected to want to use one single form of a heading; however, treatment may vary from that coded in the SAR in the Anglo-American Authority File.

FUNCTIONAL USES OF SERIES AUTHORITY RECORDS IN THE ANGLO-AMERICAN AUTHORITY FILE

The Task Group analyzed three types of information in order to compile the functional uses list: responses to its functional uses survey; responses to the Library of Congress Series Report; and the present contents of series authority records. The Task Group was particularly concerned with understanding and enumerating fully the public services uses of series authority records.

A copy of the functional uses survey and a fuller analysis of the replies received appear in Appendix II of this report.

Series authority records in the Anglo-American Authority File support both national and local functions. The maintenance of the Anglo-American Authority File enables libraries to avoid duplicating effort in order to control series at the local level.

The most important functional uses of series authority records (not given in any particular order of importance) appear to be:

PUBLIC SERVICES

*To support effective series access in OPACS

*To provide cross-references to bring together all volumes in a particular series, regardless of their physical arrangement in the library

*To support correct identification of the many items cited in publications such as abstracts and indexes only by series title and number

*To support effective reader's advisory work in public libraries, especially for compiling lists of juvenile works and genre fiction

*To support verification of interlibrary loan requests that

cite series titles as the primary element of information

TECHNICAL SERVICES

- *To support cost-effective cataloging and authority work
- *To support accurate representation of series in bibliographic records
- *To support database maintenance
- *To communicate series form and treatment decisions among libraries
- *To support machine manipulation and validation of bibliographic headings
- *To support international sharing of records
- *To record specific information about series
- *To facilitate collection development by supporting the following local functions:
 - *maintain correct information for series standing orders
 - *avoid duplication of orders in pre-order searching
 - *provide full item information for ordering

GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

The Task Group reached the following general conclusions about access to series information, based on answers to questions included in the functional uses survey, and analyses mentioned in the previous section.

- *Controlled access is needed to all types of series; there is somewhat less support for providing access to publishers' series, but this is not universal.
- *There is no consistent point of view about unnumbered series, which are quite important in work with some constituencies, such as public library patrons; support is strongest from acquisitions and collection development staff.
- *Research performed in response to the LC Series Proposal has indicated that keyword searching is not an adequate substitute for series authority control, because so many series include common words that the results of keyword searching often lack precision. This research supports the opinion of many respondents to the survey. (See Appendix I, Part B)
- *The importance of controlled access to series may vary across disciplines and types of library; however, it is not possible to make generalizations which hold true in all cases.
- *Opinion in the library community is divided about whether it is important to be able to add local series treatment information to SARs in the Anglo-American authority file or

not. However, information about series treatment is important to libraries to help them anticipate what they will find in bibliographic resource files, and to reduce duplication of effort among catalogers.

*Libraries on the whole try not to vary in form from headings in the Anglo-American authority file, but may differ as to treatment of individual series. Many local variations are classification decisions.

CONTENTS OF SERIES AUTHORITY RECORDS

Task Group 3, Authorities, recommended that participants be able to input "core" level authority records, and that a task group be appointed to determine the precise standards for those records. However, under goal 2.2., "Promote and facilitate the use of mutually accepted standards," the Program for Cooperative Cataloging Five-Year Strategic Plan enumerates the following:

"2.2.4. Task: Investigate application of the full range of status levels for authority records (full, provisional, and preliminary). Documentation should emphasize these options (rather than adopting a minimal-level encoding level for authorities)."

Therefore, this Task Group has taken the view that a new core or minimal-level SAR should not be defined. The group examined the component parts of the present record, in order to determine whether all parts are in fact useful, and what simplifications, necessary additions, or changes could easily be made.

In the opinion of the Task Group, the present SAR structure works well to support the functional uses of SARs which the group has identified. The Task Group analyzed the relationship of functional uses and contents of the SAR in the Anglo-American Authority File. A number of "function clusters" were defined, and the fields relevant to each cluster were identified. This information, contained in Appendix III of this report, will be important background information for any future analysis of the SAR and its contents.

It seems reasonable to consider that machine generation and validation of SARs will simplify series authority work in the future. It also seems reasonable not to suggest major changes until the power of systems to support authority record creation and manipulation on a cost-effective basis for a wide variety of libraries is better understood.

A proposal received in response to the LC Series Report suggested that the serial bibliographic record be used as an alternative vehicle for recording series treatment data.

The changes required would have made this a long-term solution.

It is the opinion of this Task Group that the proposal would have an adverse effect on the current goal of creating a more cooperative environment where all catalogers, (regardless of what format they work with) contribute to a shared, national authority file. The Task Group does not recommend that such a solution be pursued. Appendix IV of this report presents a summary of the interrelationship of SARs and serial bibliographic records.

SUGGESTED CHANGES TO CONTENTS IN SERIES AUTHORITY RECORDS

This section of the report enumerates changes at the field level which the Task Group judges are needed in the short term in order to support the goals of the PCC.

1. 008/33 Level of Establishment

a fully established	d preliminary
b memorandum	n not applicable
c provisional	

ADD: m machine-generated

2. 008/39 Cataloging Source

blank LC	c LC coop program
a NAL	d other
b NLM	u unknown

ADD: f foreign resource authority record

3. 4xx See From References

Relax current RIs related to 4xx's to allow for references which may have meaning but are not covered by the present rules and RIs. Do not require 4xx's that are not needed in the contributing library catalog.

COMMENT: Current guidelines are the result of complaints from NACO participants during the mid-1980's that too many references were required and that guidelines for making references were too vague.

4. 640 Dates of Publication and/or Vol. Designation, and 641 Numbering Peculiarities

Give all information formerly carried in the 640 and 641 in the 667 (Nonpublic General Note) instead.

COMMENT: This eliminates a catalogers' decision point which has often been time-consuming.

5. Treatment fields (644-646)

For 644-646, cooperative program libraries should follow existing NACO guidelines as put forth in the blue pages which supplement the USMARC Authority Format.

COMMENT: According to respondents to this Task Group's survey, information about form is generally more important to them than information about series treatment. Task Group 4 noted that treatment should be considered a local issue. Some members of the Series Authority Record Task Group were interested in exploring ways to formally separate form and treatment. For NACO libraries, in effect, form and treatment may already be separated, since NACO participants have always had the option of not including 644-646 fields in SARs. However, local circumstances vary so greatly, and the overall relationship of local functions to national functions is so complicated that any formal separation at this point would make it difficult for many libraries to record treatment at all without reverting to intensive local record-keeping.

a) For PCC work, trace all analyzed series, eliminating tracing practice as a decision point. However, do not undertake retrospective changes in tracing practice for existing SARs, which would result in a great deal of bibliographic file maintenance.

b) However, continue to code the 645 (Series Tracing Practice), for the following reasons:

- *the absence of a 645 can be confusing; it may be easier just to include it as a matter of course than to make a decision about whether to include it each time;

- *some libraries may continue to not trace particular series.

c) In the light of the above, in a machine-generated SAR, or in a system which allows the generation of defaults, set defaults for the 64x fields which reflect PCC practice.

6. 670 Sources Found

The following simplifications are suggested for the short term:

a) If the form in the source noted in subfield b exactly

matches the 1xx, (except for the presence of a qualifier, which doesn't constitute a difference), there is no need to cite usage in that 670. The series title should be cited only where there is a need to record variants not otherwise represented in the record.

b) Explore the possible effects of not citing usage in subfield b if the form exactly matches a 4xx (except for the presence of a qualifier, which doesn't constitute a difference) in the SAR, i.e. if appropriate, extend the simplification above.

c) Do not give date in subfield a of a 670 for a database search if the search was made at the time of establishing the heading.

d) Stress that style and punctuation within the 670 field generally do not have to follow specific guidelines and do not even have to be consistent from record to record as long as the information is clear. Instruct catalogers to use judgment and common sense.

COMMENT: The 670 is essential in a shared database, to assist in identification of series. Although the Task Group does not have empirical data to prove the point, it may take less time to input this field than to deal with the problems which could result from its absence. Programs are already in development which would allow for the automated generation of this field, thus reducing the human investment to be made. Full use of these capabilities should be made as they become more widely available.

Simplifications b) and c) above parallel the 670 Task Group's Simplifications #5 and #7. The Task Group on Series Authority Records also considered a recommendation to parallel the 670 group's Simplification #1. This would have allowed for the source of information to be omitted if it were the series or monograph title page. The Series Authority Record Task Group ultimately rejected this idea because the priority order of sources for series does not itself differentiate between the series title page and other title pages, and the series statement could appear in a different place on every volume. It seems that catalogers have a difficult time understanding the difference between the priority order of sources for series and that for names, and may need better information about the former, which is:

Series title page
Monograph title page
Cover
Rest of publication

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Task Group believes that many of these recommendations can be ratified or acted upon in time for the startup of the Program for Cooperative Cataloging in 1995.

1. Retain the principle, first stated by Task Group 1, that for every access point there should be a record in the Anglo-American Authority File. Therefore, provide a series authority record for every series.

COMMENT: In different contexts, series authority control may or may not be required for certain types of series, but at the national/international level, it is impossible to make generalizations which say that controlled access to any particular type of series is NEVER required. It seems simpler to be consistent in requiring authority records for all series than to introduce exceptions which will provide new decision points for catalogers.

2. Adopt as the national-level series authority record a rationalized, dynamic, full-level record, rather than a "core" record or a minimal-level record.

3. Allow preliminary and memo levels for the coding of retrospectively converted SARs (see Recommendation 11), and allow for provisional PCC SARs.

COMMENT: this would facilitate the contribution of current and retrospective SARs which, like bibliographic records, would be dynamic and could be built on later. Given the PCC workflow, they might not be used very often, but the option might be helpful.

4. Propose to MARBI the following coding changes, which require MARBI discussion papers and action:

- a) Define and implement a new value for 039 (Cataloging Source), for a foreign resource authority record
- b) Define and implement a new value for 033 (Level of Establishment), for a machine-generated record

5. Relax current RI's related to 4xx's to allow for references which may have meaning but are not covered by the present rules and RI's.

6. Discontinue use of the 640 (Dates of Publication and/or Vol. Designation) and the 641 (Numbering Peculiarities) in favor of recording all such information in the 667 (Nonpublic General Note).

7. If the form in the source noted in subfield b exactly matches the 1xx (except for the presence of a qualifier, which doesn't constitute a difference), there is no need to cite usage in that 670. The series title should be cited

only where there is a need to record variants not otherwise represented in the record.

8. Explore the possible effects of not citing usage in subfield b if the form exactly matches a 4xx in the SAR (except for the presence of a qualifier, which doesn't constitute a difference) ; i.e. if appropriate, extend the simplification above.

9. Do not give date in subfield a of a 670 for a database search if the search was made at the time of establishing the heading.

10. Stress that style and punctuation within the 670 field generally do not have to follow specific guidelines and do not even have to be consistent from record to record as long as the information is clear. Instruct catalogers to use judgment and common sense.

11. Recruit for NACO those libraries which have large retrospective files of series, and give them some incentive to convert. Solicit SARs for titles not represented in the Anglo-American Authority File from local retrospective files in order to build the national file. Load these records, which may not meet PCC standards, with the appropriate encoding level (see Recommendation 3).

12. When PCC procedures are decided upon, commission a Series Authority Record section to be added to the NACO manual as quickly as possible.

COMMENT: This manual would lay out the policies and procedures for national/international level records. It is the strong opinion of the Task Group that centralizing this information, and removing the parts of existing documentation that relate only to the LC workflow would do a great deal to ease the difficulties some libraries have in applying NACO series procedures, and the reluctance of others to get involved. A one-volume compilation for future editions of the NACO manual is recommended rather than a second volume about series.

It is essential that instructions for catalogers be made as simple and consistent as possible, so that they spend less time deciding what to do with each series. Monographic catalogers need training in order to understand the concept of seriality, which underlies series authority work. Training should continue to emphasize catalogers' judgment.

13. Use new series procedures as a proving ground for ideas from the Cataloger Training Task Group about training for new procedures, and provide extensive publicity for the changes.

14. Ensure that new series procedures facilitate the use of machine generation and manipulation techniques, as they become widely available.

15. PCC libraries and the Executive Council should promote further research to investigate how patrons and staff

interact with series information in catalogs, and to provide direction for the future of authority control

*alert ACIG and the ALCTS/CCS Policy & Research Committee to this research need

*promote and perhaps commission cooperative research efforts by PCC members and others

*particularly valuable in the PCC context is research that weighs the cost of access against the value of that access in the information-seeking process.

COMMENT: Organized cost analyses in the PCC context are particularly needed; as is evident from the Functions section of this report, the uses of series are many and varied, and while changes in series authority work may be inevitable, they could have wide-ranging and unexpected effects.

16. Trace all analyzed series. In a machine-generated record, or a system which allows the setting of defaults, set them accordingly.

17. Retain the concept of the series-like phrase, but simplify the decision-making process.

*reinforce the use of cataloger's judgment to decide whether a particular string represents a series name or not

*minimize the use of this option; when in doubt, say that a string is a series and trace it, "do not agonize"

COMMENT: The Task Group considered doing away with this category altogether, but there is some value in determining that a particular string is not a series, and recording that information, so that someone else will not have to do the same work.

18. Investigate whether evolving technology allows better ways to conventionalize numbering patterns, so as to reduce the attention which must be given to numbering in the treatment area of the series authority record.

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