MARC AUTHORITY RECORD CREATION AND FILE MANAGEMENT

prepared by

Randall K. Barry
(Internet: RBAR@LOC.GOV)

Library of Congress
Acquisitions and Bibliographic Access Directorate

WHAT WILL BE COVERED

- **Overview of the realities of authority file creation**

- **Source of costs**

- **Requirements for staff doing authority work**

- **Factors important to efficiency**

- **Authority record distribution considerations**

- **Training, documentation, quality review**

- **Authority database oversight and conversion strategies**

THE REALITIES OF AUTHORITY FILES

- **Authority work can be the most costly part of cataloging;**

- **Most MARC bibliographic records require that at least two authority records exist:**

  - One for a person, corporate body, or meeting name;

  - At least one for the primary subject heading(s);

- **Roughly 50% of all authority records have no tracings;**

- **Less than 50% of all new bibliographic records require authority work (the average is usually greater than 2 bibliographic records for each authority record).**

AUTOMATED AUTHORITY RECORD CREATION

- **Most MARC systems support the automatic generation of authority records for headings in controlled fields;**

- **Coded fields and required variable fields are supplied by the system, often with helpful MARC validation;**

- **The heading (1XX) and source citation (670) are generated from the corresponding MARC bibliographic record;**

- **Catalogers only need to add information found elsewhere, as well as tracings and any references needed.**

THE COSTLY PART OF AUTHORITY WORK

- **Research required to differentiate similar names;**

- **Research required to provide tracings from fuller names (for initials and bodies using acronyms);**

- **Research required to identify corporate names in order to provide corporate hierarchy and parent bodies;**

- **Research required to locate populated places (cities, towns, larger jurisdictions within countries);**

- **Research to find original titles for translations.**

- **Research required to establish new subject terms.**

REQUIREMENTS FOR AUTHORITY WORK

- **Ability to read the script and language of an item to be cataloged (knowledge of a related language helps);**

- **Familiarity with existing bibliographic and biographical reference sources—both in print and online;**

- **A broad, general educational background is often more useful than highly specialized advanced study;**

- **Familiarity with data input via computer and any modern MARC-based library system.**

KEY FACTORS FOR EFFICIENT AUTHORITY FILE MANAGEMENT

- Timely searching of headings before input;

- Generous provision of tracings and references;

- Quality review of bibliographic records that result in new authority records (name, title, and subject);

- Infrastructure for corrections to existing headings;

- Availability and use of global update tools;

- Cooperation with libraries acquiring similar items.

WHO SHOULD DO AUTHORITY WORK?

- **Authority work is best done by professional librarians;**

- **Catalogers doing bibliographic analysis can most easily assess the need for authority records;**

- **Understanding of subject helps subject authority work;**

- **Corrections and file maintenance can be done by para-professionals if simple problems (typos) are involved;**

- **Validation software can greatly reduce errors.**

WAYS TO MAKE AUTORITY WORK EFFICIENT

- **Rely on national bibliographic agencies for authority records for headings in recent trade publications;**

- **Group bibliographic items by language or discipline (for highly technical and scientific works);**

- **Make headings provisional when information is not available to resolve conflicts or clarify names;**

- **Document uncertainties for other users of the authority file (let them know what you are thinking).**

EXAMPLE OF AN INFORMATIVE AUTHORITY

100 1[]#aBradley, Jan

667 [][]#aCannot identify with Janice Bradley, author of works on genealogy, published by Brigham Young University.

670 [][]#aCruising the south seas, 1998:$b t.p. (Jan Bradley) p. 4 of cover (first novel; lives in Provo, Utah)

675 [][]#aWho's who in American fiction, 1999.

675 [][]#aBrigham Young Univ. web site, Mar. 7, 2000.

DISTRIBUTION OF AUTHORITY RECORDS

■ **Daily distribution of records to partners is ideal;**

■ **Since many authorities undergo initial revision, distribution more often than daily causes problems;**

■ **De-duplication routines should be used to filter imported authorities from external sources;**

■ **Include useful local data (codes for cataloger?);**

■ **A standardized system of control numbers can be very useful (MARC does not govern control numbers).**

MARC RECORD CONTROL NUMBERS

- **All MARC records must have field 001;**

- **Each library can use a different number in field 001;**

- **Numbers are moved to field 035 when replaced by a different library;**

- **Pre-assigned ranges of numbers for program participants can eliminate control number changes;**

- **Printing of control number labels is recommended**

- **Automation of assignment is another option.**

MARC Authority Management

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TRAINING OF STAFF

- **Two *levels* of training should be provided: introductory training and advanced training;**

- **At least two *varieties* of training should be provided: training for managers & training for catalogers;**

- **Apply the "train the trainer" concept if a large number of staff need to be trained;**

- **Remedial training may be needed periodically;**

- **Plan for training at times of system upgrades.**

DOCUMENTATION

- **Adequate documentation must be prepared for staff who will be required to create and maintain records;**

- **Workflow and standards issues should be integrated as much as possible;**

- **Many inefficiencies result from poor documentation;**

- **Translate as much as documentation as possible into the working language of the staff.**

- **Training documentation may not suit day-to-day work.**

- **Create "cheat sheets" for some documentation**

QUALITY REVIEW

- No one is perfect; everyone makes mistakes;

- Plan for some kind of periodic quality review;

- It is important to be able to identify who handled a record found to contain errors;

- Allow for remedial training of staff with unacceptable error rates;

- It is more cost-effective to plan to correct a certain number of errors than to expect absolute perfection.

COMMON PROBLEMS WITH MARC AUTHORITIES

- **Typographical errors (misspellings);**

- **Errors in punctuation and diacritical marks;**

- **Duplicate name authorities;**

- **MARC content designation errors (wrong tag/subfield)**

- **Missing or inappropriate codes in coded data fields;**

- **Incomplete name authority records;**

- **Missing name authority records (for new headings).**

AUTHORITY DATABASE OVERSIGHT

- **Healthy MARC databases require oversight by a responsible group;**

- **Monitoring of file size and quality should be periodic, but not less than once a year;**

- **Quality of the work of contributors to the database should be monitored at least once a year;**

- **Periodic systemic operations, such as re-indexing of records, should be done periodically.**

COLLECTIVE ROLE OF MAINTENANCE

- **It is rare that one person is solely responsible for the maintenance of a file of MARC authority records;**

- **Each contributor should be urged to take responsibility for improving the authority database;**

- **Provide a mechanism for reporting errors and suggesting improvements to the database;**

- **Even library patrons can be allowed to help;**

- **Paper or Web-based forms are popular options.**

RETROSPECTIVE CONVERSION STRATEGIES

■ **Start with headings needed for new cataloging;**

■ **Target prolific/important authors in existing catalog;**

■ **Use paraprofessional staff for conversion to MARC of any manual authority data;**

■ **Consider generation of provisional authority records by machine from available bibliographic data;**

■ **Flag retrospective records so that they can be reviewed;**

■ **Consider a broad cooperative retrospective project.**

MARC AUTHORITY FILE SECURITY

- **Read-only access for most library patrons, assuming no data is restricted or objectionable;**

- **Input/update access to staff who add and maintain records in the database;**

- **No system should make it easy to destroy records;**

- **Provide security to prevent purposeful data hacking;**

- **Consider limitations on how many records can be requested and obtained at one time (harvesting).**

MARC SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS

- **1) Ability to import MARC records**

- **2) Ability to export MARC records**

- **3) Ability to create, change, and delete records from a MARC database**

- **4) "Roundtrip" compatibility of data (no loss of data during processing)**

- **5) Ability to handle special characters (Latin script, letters with diacritics and non-Latin scripts)**

USERS OF THE MARC FORMATS

✓ **Public libraries and media centers**

✓ **Industrial and governmental archives**

✓ **Community information providers (local, state, provincial, national, and international)**

✓ **Museums (other than their libraries)**

✓ **School and universities (probably the most active group of MARC users)**

ADVANTAGES OF THE MARC 21 FORMATS

- **In use for almost 40 years (since November 1969);**

- **Has a very high level of conformity within a small number of standard implementations;**

- **The basis for library networks;**

- **Worldwide standard for machine-readable data;**

- **Flexibility for all types of data (the format adapts easily for different classes of information).**

MAINTENANCE OF THE MARC 21 FORMATS BY THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

- **Maintenance agency for the MARC 21 formats: The Library of Congress, Network Development and MARC Standards Office;**

- **Documentation: 5 formats; 5 code lists; specifications for the MARC structure MARC, character sets, and exchange media;**

- **Coordination of MARC Advisory Group; two meetings per year of the international group "MARBI".**

ONLINE MARC 21 SUPPORT: IN ENGLISH

FOREIGN LANGUAGE SUPPORT: IN SPANISH