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On Good Authority: NACO Participation at the University of Southern Mississippi

Kathleen L. Wells

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Introduction

"NACO? Isn't that only for the largest research libraries?" "We could never meet the quotas." "We don't have time to contribute." "Our work wouldn't generate the right kind of headings." "We don't do enough original cataloging." If your library has considered participation in authority control at the national level, questions and objections like the foregoing may have been raised. The prospect of contributing to an authority file used by libraries throughout the United States and beyond may be somewhat daunting in itself. However, participation in the Name Authority Cooperative Program may be within your library's reach. Since joining the program in November 2001, catalogers at the University of Southern Mississippi (USM) Libraries have found that many rewards and few drawbacks come with NACO membership.

NACO is the name authority component of the Library of Congress Program for Cooperative Cataloging (PCC). (The other components are BIBCO, through which participants create bibliographic records according to certain standards; CONSER, the cooperative serials cataloging program; and SACO, the subject authority program.) Through the NACO program, after appropriate training, libraries contribute authority records for names, series, and uniform titles to LC's online authority file. Records are contributed through the bibliographic utilities, OCLC or RLIN. Individual catalogers do not join NACO; participation is at the institutional level, though groups of libraries can form a *funnel project* to contribute records through a project coordinator (see "What About Quotas," below).

Getting Started

The first step in joining NACO is providing the Library of Congress with information on the applying institution's local online system, bibliographic utility, amount of cataloging and authority work performed, number of staff to be trained, and collection strengths (the application form is available at http://www.loc.gov/catdir/pcc/nacoappl.html). Samples of the institution's cataloging may be requested by LC. If the application is approved, the library can choose to send catalogers to LC for training, or have a NACO representative come to the institution and provide the training onsite. The institutions receiving the training are responsible for the trainer's travel expenses. By sharing the expenses with two other Mississippi institutions that sent catalogers to be trained, USM Libraries was able to host the weeklong training session onsite.

What Does the Training Involve?

NACO training involves a thorough review of the *Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules* (AACR2) Chapters 22-26, the corresponding Library of Congress Rule Interpretations (LCRI), and LC practice in the creation of authority records. The AACR2 chapters cover the establishment of headings for personal, corporate, geographic, and conference names as well as uniform titles. Most of the training focuses on personal, corporate and conference headings, since additional training is required for the submission of series authority records, music headings, and geographic name headings. During the week, trainees can use examples from their institution's cataloging to create actual name authority records that, on approval, will be added to the LC authority file, so they become NACO participants from the start. After the training, catalogers use OCLC or RLIN to submit their headings to a contact person assigned to their institution by LC's Cooperative Cataloging Team. This person reviews the library's records, answers questions, and provides further instruction as needed during a probationary period that can last up to a year. The length of the review period depends on how many records a library submits and on the quality of the records. When the NACO contact decides that an institution can operate without review, he/she gives the library independent status, authorizing its catalogers to add authority records directly to the LC file and to revise existing records. This release from review may come with certain

restrictions, which vary depending on the level of training the catalogers have received. The library may be authorized to contribute only certain types of authority records. The review period for USM Libraries lasted nine months, during which approximately 500 authority records were submitted and reviewed.

What Kind of Cataloging Generates Headings?

The short answer is, "anything not cataloged by the Library of Congress." As vast as LC's collections are, there are many types of material that may not be represented by DLC-DLC catalog records in the bibliographic utilities; titles not owned by LC are not likely to generate LC authority records. Audiovisual materials, some juvenile literature, state government publications, curriculum materials, and titles of local interest published by smaller presses or self-published by authors are possible sources of NACO headings. At USM, much of the Libraries' NACO work is generated by cataloging for the McCain Library and Archives, a special collections library that holds Mississippiana (state documents, oral histories, and other materials of Mississippi interest), genealogy materials, the university archives, rare materials, and the De Grummond Children's Literature Collection. Rather than having to hunt for headings to contribute, catalogers find that potential headings come up naturally in the course of their work. While contributing headings based on a library's original cataloging is valuable, headings can also be submitted for names found in the process of cataloging with member-input copy or with older DLC copy that predates the online authority file. Database cleanup projects are another source of headings. USM catalogers have a ready-made list of names in need of authority work in the form of "exceptions" lists of headings not matched by the Libraries' authority control vendor.

But Isn't There a Lot of Research Involved?

The amount of work involved in creating personal name headings may not be as great as some catalogers anticipate. While some research is required to avoid establishing the same form of name for two different people, the process of creating a heading for most personal names is quite straightforward, involving identification of the form(s) of name the person uses in his/her works. Often, the works being cataloged, and the bibliographic utility's database to which the records will be added, are all that need to be consulted. The creation of corporate headings, and of personal names with cross references, can be more time-consuming. But for the effort required, the rewards are considerable: the cataloger creates a record that can be used in his/her library's local authority file and in libraries around the world. NACO participation is not solely a mechanism to increase catalog quality. Like all cooperative cataloging, it reduces duplication of effort. An authority record does not have to contain cross-references or lengthy explanatory notes to be useful. Even the simplest authority record, consisting of a name and citation of the work being cataloged, can be of value to other catalogers and can eliminate the need for the creation of a local record for the heading in their authority files.

What about Quotas?

Until recently, there was no quota for NACO participants, though the Library of Congress posted a *recommended* contribution level of 400 headings per year. In November 2002, LC began requiring 200 headings per year from large libraries and 100 per year from state, public, college, and special libraries.[1] If a library has concerns about being able to meet the quotas, particularly in these times of budget cuts, participation in NACO is still possible. The library can join a funnel project, a good way to contribute for libraries with smaller cataloging operations. Funnel participants create records and submit them through a project coordinator, who may or may not be located at their institution. The coordinator recruits members, hosts training sessions, and disseminates information to funnel project members. Coordinators may also serve as trainers and reviewers. LC has funnels organized by subject area (music, art); by location (state funnel projects); and by membership in a consortium. USM Libraries is the coordinator for the Mississippi Funnel Project, and plans to participate in the SACO African-American Subject Funnel Project after catalogers receive further training. For more information on funnel projects, see http://www.loc.gov/catdir/pcc/naco/funnelfaq.html#2. Comparative information on different types of NACO membership is also available at http://www.loc.gov/catdir/pcc/naco/funres.html.

Is NACO for My Library?

Before investigating NACO, there are several questions that a technical services manager may want to ask:

1. What types of material do we catalog? Does our workload include many materials for which we are unable to find DLC catalog copy? Do our collections contain material of local interest, non-print materials, or other likely sources of NACO headings?

2. How much local authority work are we doing? Are we creating authority records in our database? Would those records be of use to other libraries if they were available through the LC authority file?

3. How many headings could we expect to contribute? Do we have staff and time enough to participate? (Remember, funnel participation is available for libraries that may not have extensive staff resources to devote to authority work.)

Conclusion

The Library of Congress authority file is a valuable resource consulted by catalogers every day. For a cataloger, being a part of the creation and maintenance of that file is personally and professionally satisfying. For the library, there is the prestige of contributing to an international cooperative cataloging effort.

Reference

[1] NACO program FAQ (http://www.loc.gov/catdir/pcc/nacoprogfaq.html#11), viewed 1/4/03.

For further information on NACO: http://www.loc.gov/catdir/pcc/naco.html
http://www.loc.gov/catdir/pcc/nacoprogfaq.html#11

For information on the Program for Cooperative Cataloging:
http://www.loc.gov/catdir/pcc/

Guidelines for Book Reviews

The Southeastern Library Association is pleased to accept book review submissions for possible publication in *The Southeastern Librarian*. Guidelines are as follows:

- Title needs to have been published within the past two years.
- The work should have some connection to the Southern USA, either by content or the author's association with the south.
- Reviewer will obtain his/her own copy of the book. SELA is not able to provide a courtesy copy.
- Suggested length is 500-750 words. Shorter or longer submissions will also be considered.

Submissions will be judged on writing style, content and perceived interest to the readership of the journal. Please forward reviews and any questions to Frank R. Allen, editor, at fallen@mail.ucf.edu.