

Authorized Access Points for Translations: a proposal

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At its meeting at the 2015 ALA Annual Conference, SCS considered two discussion papers on the subject of authorized access points (AAP) for translations, one by Stephen Hearn and one by Chew Chiat Naun. The present document was prepared at the request of SCS. It draws together many of the points Stephen made in framing the discussion and elaborates on one of the options presented in Naun's paper. The other proposals offered in their original discussion papers are given here in appendices.

Background

Under the *Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules* (2nd edition, revised—hereafter AACR2), uniform titles were generally used to collocate similar but not necessarily identical bibliographic objects together under a single access point. Uniform titles for translations were constructed by adding one or two language terms to the uniform title for a work. AACR2 25.5C1 states:

If the linguistic content of the item being cataloged is different from that of the original (e.g., a translation, a dubbed motion picture), add the name of the language of the item to the uniform title.

The resulting uniform title was routinely applied to more than one translation of the same work in the same language. Thus, a single uniform title would cover all the translations of a work in a given language. As each new translation in a given language was cataloged, information about it would be added to the authority record's 670 notes and to its 4XX references.

Although superficially resembling AACR2 uniform titles, AAPs in *Resource Description & Access* (RDA) have a different basis. They serve as names for the relevant FRBR entities - in this case, expressions with a given language attribute. RDA 6.27.3 states:

Construct an authorized access point representing a particular expression of a work or a part or parts of a work by combining (in this order):

- a) the authorized access point representing the work (see 6.27.1) or the part or parts of a work (see 6.27.2)
- b) one or more of the following elements:
 - i) the content type (see 6.0)
 - ii) the date of the expression (see 6.10)
 - iii) the language of the expression (see 6.11)and/or
- iv) another distinguishing characteristic of the expression (see 6.12).

The examples for RDA 6.27.3 include instances where two translations into the same language are distinguished:

Virgil. Aeneis. Liber 1-6. English (Butler)
Virgil. Aeneis. Liber 1-6. English (Richardson)

However, the current LC-PCC Policy Statement (hereafter PS) allows deviation from this rule. For LC practice, the PS for RDA 6.27.3 instructs catalogers to create language version authorities very similar to those created under AACR2:

When identifying an expression not already represented by a name authority record, do not add another characteristic to differentiate one such expression from another expression (e.g., do not differentiate one translation of Shakespeare's Hamlet in French from another French translation; do not differentiate one arrangement of Berlioz' Corsaire from another arrangement).¹

This policy statement opens up a divergence in cataloging practice, with some libraries following the RDA instruction, and others the LC policy. The PCC Policy Committee has asked the Standing Committee on Standards to investigate the divergence. The specification that the authorized access point is for "a particular expression of a work" conflicts with the LC policy of not distinguishing between different translations of a work at the level of the access point in an authority record. The current PS seeks to reconcile these divergent practices by permitting either kind of authority to be used to authorize an access point in a bibliographic record:

If there is a name authority record with an authorized access point for an expression that includes an additional characteristic LC would not have added, use the form of the access point in that authority record; this action is consistent with the LC/PCC policy of using authorized access points in existing name authority records.

¹ This approach was adopted by LC for use during the U.S. RDA Test for two reasons:

1) Because language had not been used in uniform titles for general works other than translations, existing AACR2 authority records for works also represent the expression of that work in the original language. Adopting an approach that would cause/allow for the addition of an original language to an expression access point would mean that headings on legacy records would remain ambiguous and potentially out-of-sync with authority records.

2) Given the potential impact on the authority file and legacy bibliographic records, LC did not want to make this decision unilaterally, with the understanding that the PCC was [charging](#) a task group (PCC Access Points for Expressions Task Group) to address issues such as "undifferentiated" access points, legacy bibliographic records, order of differentiating attributes, etc. The PCC RDA Policy Statements Task Group asked that the "status quo" followed by LC for the test be made "LC practice" only until the issue was resolved.

The Access Points for Expressions Task Group recommended that conforming to the LC practice was desirable, but also confirmed that PCC catalogers could exercise careful cataloger's judgment when opting to further differentiate expressions. They recognized that recommendations and best practices for differentiating expressions in specific situations may arise with more experience

In what follows, an authority record created under current LC practice will sometimes be referred to as representing an *undifferentiated expression*.

Analysis

Entity represented

The FRBR model that RDA is intended to implement is based on the explicit articulation of entities along with their attributes and relationships. A fundamental limitation of authorities created according to the current LC practice is that, by design, they do not represent any specific entity. For example, what does

Shakespeare, William, 1564-1616. Hamlet. French

refer to—a particular specified translation, or a discrete collection of particular specified translations, or an open-ended set of translations meeting specified criteria? Only the third of these definitions is consistent with the use of these AAPs in the larger pool of catalog data.

This limitation goes beyond the information carried by the AAP. The authority records bearing these AAPs cannot include other expression-level information such as translators, illustrators, relationships to other expressions, and so on, since those details are specific to individual expressions. The current PS relegates those data to the bibliographic record:

Other elements in LC's bibliographic record (e.g., translator, date, medium of performance) are available to the user for selecting a specific expression if desired;

That approach, however, compromises the identification and characterization of specific expression entities. For example, it will not be possible to derive a URI representing an expression from the LCCN of the authority record, or from the bibliographic record. It is sometimes said that MARC is not a true FRBR environment and that solution of such problems can await the emergence of a mature replacement for MARC. However, MARC authorities *can* represent FRBR expressions and in so far as that is not done, migrating the data will be more difficult.

The mix of practices tolerated by the current PS also complicates authority maintenance. Does an authority with an AAP ending with the name of a language and citing only one expression represent only that particular expression following RDA, or does it represent all expressions in that language following the LC policy? This uncertainty can lead to cases where an AAP has been assigned in catalogs to multiple expressions in a given language and then been re-scoped with information such as a qualifier for a particular translator name which applies to only a single translation. Changing the meaning of an authority, the definition of the entity or concept it represents, after it is in circulation is always problematic and best avoided. Similarly, having

differentiated expression authority records/access points representing the same expression found in legacy records without such differentiation presents challenges to users and maintainers of the catalog.

Variant access points

An important purpose served by work and expression authorities is to provide variant access points. Legacy practice, as enshrined in the current PS, also raises questions concerning how variant access points are recorded. Here it may be useful to try and distinguish two kinds of variant access points: instance titles representing (and typically transcribed from) particular translated editions, and titles by which a work is generally known to its foreign readers. To illustrate the distinction, there is an English translation of Dante's *Divina commedia* by Patrick Cummins with the instance title *Dante, Theologian*; but the work is generally known to English readers simply as the *Divine comedy*.

The existing practice of recording 4XXs with instance titles representing particular translated editions on an authority has long been problematical. The 4XX references from particular edition titles to a generic access point for expressions in a given language are a holdover from the era when the authority file was closely integrated with a single collection's catalog. The 4XX in that case represented a title held by the collection and as such was a useful finding device for users of the collection. However, in today's environment the LC authority file is generally seen as a community resource, and these references no longer correspond to the editions held by any single library. An example of an authority with an extensive list of 4XX instance titles is the one cited above for Dante's *Divina commedia* (n 83206390). In such cases, the 4XX can actually mislead a user into looking for an edition not available at her library. The practice of including these titles in an authority is in any case unnecessary, because access to the particular translation titles held by a collection will be provided by the collection's bibliographic records. For these reasons, a strong argument can be made that generic translation authorities are not needed to support instance titles.

Are variant access points not required, then, in work and expression authorities? There is a use case that supports the inclusion of variant titles of a certain kind. Many works are commonly known by one or more alternative forms of title by user communities outside the native speakers of the work's original language. The see-from reference

100 1 Tolstoy, Leo, graf, 1828-1900. Voïna i mir. English
400 1 Tolstoy, Leo, graf, 1828-1900. War and peace

is not likely to be read as promising a particular English translation and would be widely regarded as helpful by library users. The same point is especially clear in a subject context: when a library user says she is looking for books about Tolstoy's War and Peace, she can be understood to be looking for books that discuss War and Peace in any of its language versions, and not only those in English. This use case supports an argument for giving certain variant

titles not in expression but in work authorities. Deciding how to accommodate title variants is not a new problem, but it is one that will need to be addressed in any proposed solution.

Collocation

An argument often, and rightly, advanced for the creation of work and expression authorities is their utility in collocating versions of a work that may be known by different instance titles. It is worth taking a moment to examine this rationale more closely.

There are, in fact, good reasons for believing that the addition of a \$I language element to a work AAP for an undifferentiated authority has little value in itself. Since there is no entity being identified by the authority, the fact that the authority includes (or at least implies) a language attribute is neither here nor there. For retrieval purposes this information is already coded elsewhere in the MARC bibliographic record. Indeed, MARC 008/35-37 and 041 are much more dependably coded in most library catalogs than 130/240/7XX \$I. A discovery system well designed to take advantage of MARC data - for example, by presenting language options via a filtering menu or in facets - will lose little in retrieval functionality by disregarding language additions to authorized access points and relying instead exclusively on 008 and 041 data.

Nevertheless, the use of AAPs for language versions fulfills one important purpose, which is to identify the associated work entity in precisely those cases where the work is most likely to be known to its audiences by a variety of titles. It allows the versions of a work to be clustered before they are further sorted or clustered by language or other characteristics. It is worth noting, however, that this objective can still be met if only the associated work entity is given an authority. This possibility will be considered in the solution proposed below.

Workload

Perhaps underlying much of the debate surrounding granularity of expression authorities is a pragmatic consideration. Authority records are considered - with some justification - to be onerous to create, and it seems plausible that the argument for accepting undifferentiated language expression authorities in large part reflects concerns about increasing the demands on staff capacity too far beyond what they had been under AACR2. These concerns are not universal, and have not prevented the creation of true RDA expression authorities from becoming an entrenched practice in some quarters. There have also been promising results from the VIAF translation authority project for machine-aided generation of expression authorities. Nevertheless, any proposed solution must accommodate the realities of production capacity as they exist in many libraries.

Proposed solution

General outline

The solution proposed here seeks to address the concerns outlined in this discussion paper. It meets the following requirements:

- It eliminates the mixed practice allowed under the current PS for RDA 6.27.3 and restricts the creation of authorities to cases involving true FRBR expression entities
- It does not compel catalogers to create authorities for all expressions, but is compatible with the creation of the relevant authorities at a subsequent stage
- It does not require revision of AAPs in bibliographic records created under LC practice
- It permits alphabetical collocation of works - if desired, by language
- It supports retrieval by variant titles

The proposal is intended for use in our present MARC environment, and should be regarded as an interim solution. Here is the proposal:

Require an RDA work authority to be created in cases where the title to be cataloged is a translation. Allow - or encourage - the creation of true RDA expression authorities with AAPs differentiated by additions beyond the language and other attributes coded as appropriate. Do not, however, continue to create undifferentiated expression authorities. Instead, adopt the following procedure in cases where a true expression authority is not created:

Allow undifferentiated language access point constructions, but back them only with a work authority.

Example of bib:

100 1 \$a Tolstoy, Leo, \$c graf, \$d 1828-1910.

240 10 \$a Voïna I mir. \$l English

245 10 \$a Becky's War and Peace / \$c Leo Tolstoy ; translated by R. Culbertson.

Associated authority:

100 1 \$a Tolstoy, Leo, \$c graf, \$d 1828-1910. \$t Voïna I mir

The undifferentiated expression AAP is present only in the bib, and serves in effect as a stub for a full expression AAP. It is not given a corresponding undifferentiated language expression authority. However, the AAP still serves to associate this manifestation with the relevant work authority, and to collocate entries at the work and language level in systems still relying on an alphabetical title browse to offer retrieval by language.

Under this procedure, a cataloger can come back to the existing bib AAP at some later time and upgrade it to a full authorized expression without fear of conflict.

Further issues

If the solution described above is adopted, a number of additional issues will need to be addressed.

1. Should existing undifferentiated expression authorities be deprecated? If so, what further actions are required to ensure retention of any important data they may contain or to preserve the integrity of the authority file? For example, other authorities may point to them.
2. Will the work authority continue to stand in for an undifferentiated expression in the work's original language, following current LC practice?
3. How should variant access points be recorded?
 - a. What kind of variant titles specifically pertain to expressions, and where should they be recorded - in the work authority, an expression authority, or as titles or variant titles on the bibliographic record? (See discussion above.)
 - b. How should translated titles that are associated with a language but not necessarily with a specific expression be handled, e.g. "War and Peace"?
4. How should work and expression identifiers be given? In particular, what if any identifier should be given when a bibliographic record is given an authorized access point corresponding to an undifferentiated expression?
5. Is it feasible to have all PCC catalogers apply the new approach for distinguishing expressions to newly published works/expressions, and reserve the approaches described above for legacy records?
6. What is the impact of adopting this general solution, and the various possible answers to each of the above questions, on automated headings maintenance in bibliographic records?

Appendix A

In his original discussion paper, Stephen Hearn proposed that the continuing use of undifferentiated language expressions could be justified by appeal to the notion of *class-level entities*. Examples of these include the FRBR Group 1 and Group 2 entities. The class of expressions with a common language attribute would constitute a third example. He proposed the following scenarios if this solution were to be adopted.

Scenarios

If approved in concept and formulated as LC-PCC policy, the implementation of such a policy could follow a number of scenarios. Three are offered here as examples.

1. Legacy-only class AAPs for translations. Class level AAPs for translations under LC-PCC policy would be allowed only when recoding an existing translation AAP for RDA. Modifications would be made to the existing AAP's authority to make it more generic, e.g., by moving any title-level 4XXs to a new separate authority for the particular translation. Any translation RDA AAP for which no class-level AAP exists would be created for the particular translation with individuating qualifiers. No new class-level AAPs for translations would be added to the LC/NACO Authority File. In practice, this scenario would impose significant additional work on libraries moving pre-RDA translation authorities into RDA/LC-PCC PS compliance, and would require libraries like LC to abandon their practice of not differentiating translations in the same language, at least for newly cataloged translations without established class-level AAPs.

2. New RDA class AAPs allowed but not required. LC and NACO contributors would be permitted to create new RDA authorities for class-level translation resources, but not required to do so. A library which prefers to create and use only instance-level AAPs for translations would be free to do so with no obligation to create an authority for the intermediate class-level AAP. Another library following a policy of preferring the use of class-level AAPs could create such authorities for newly cataloged resources. Both would be required by LC-PCC policy to follow a pattern for the AAPs—Work AAP + Language + Further qualification—that would ensure a consistent access hierarchy.

3. New RDA class AAPs required. Any library creating an authority for a translated work for which the language of translation is not already established would be obligated by LC-PCC policy to create the class-level authority as well as the instance-level authority to ensure preservation of the AAP hierarchy. This scenario would place an added burden on libraries choosing to focus on instance-level access to their collection, a burden which might be more equitably distributed under scenario 2.

Appendix B

This appendix describes a variation of the procedure outlined above under “Proposed solution”.

Allow the bib record to be associated only with a work authority regardless of language.

Example of bib:

100 1 \$a Tolstoy, Leo, \$c graf, \$d 1828-1910.

240 10 \$a Vořna I mir

245 10 \$a Becky’s War and Peace / \$c Leo Tolstoy ; translated by R. Culbertson.

Associated authority:

100 1 \$a Tolstoy, Leo, \$c graf, \$d 1828-1910. \$t Vořna I mir

The bib heading specifies the work and collocates entries accordingly but is silent on the expression.