

Preliminary Report of the SCS Task Group on Privacy in Name Authority Records

Date: March 5, 2024

Task Group Charge

The task group is charged with identifying guiding principles for privacy of information relating to persons and families in NARs and for critical evaluation of sources of information, building on the PCC Position Statement on Personal Data in Name Authority Records. The task group will then develop best practices based on these principles and propose revisions to LC/PCC Documentation as needed to support these best practices. The full charge of the task group is available [here](#).

Activities & Accomplishments

The task group held our first meeting on December 5 and has met twice a month since January. Our initial member survey shows that not every member has extensive prior experience or knowledge of issues related to privacy in the collection and use of data about people and families. During January and February, we read a couple of articles and discussed critical issues of privacy of information. Some of our discussions are summarized as guiding principles and included here. It should be noted that this is a working document.

- "Concern for privacy" is not a supplemental feature of the NAF, but an integral part of how authority work should be performed.
- There is no objective standard of privacy that exists in all cases; rather, the term "privacy" speaks to an implicit and ethical understanding of how much, and what kind of information about individuals is appropriate to share and record, in a particular context.
- The "particular context" in this case is the management of bibliographic identities to enable the identification, selection, and use of bibliographic works that are related in various ways to those identities.
- In general, the reason to manage someone's bibliographic identity is because something related to that identity has been "published"--i.e. made public. However, we should recognize that not all collections consist exclusively of published materials, and even for published materials there may be reasons not to facilitate identification between a bibliographic identity and its living referent. Different risk analyses for different publication scenarios should be considered.
- The best way to limit privacy risks is to refocus authority work on the task of collecting and documenting only that information that serves the immediate needs of the authority file. We should not "anticipate a conflict" in the name authority index, nor

should we use the authority file to store away information about an identity against some future need.

- Subjects of authority records may be associated with national, cultural, tribal, or ethnic groups, religions, professions, and so forth. When recording these associations for living referents, the terminology used should match, as closely as possible, the terminology the referents themselves recognize or use. The use of controlled vocabulary, while desirable in most cases, does not override self-description by living referents, when such is available.
- When a living person is aware that they are represented in the NAF, they should be presumed to have a greater degree of control over how they are represented. However, changes to the AR should also take the function of the authority record into consideration, to unambiguously identify bibliographic identities.

Future Plans

The task group is now divided into three subgroups, though any subgroup member is welcome to contribute to other subgroups. One subgroup will continue to update guiding principles and the other two subgroups will develop best practices and recommend revisions to LC/PCC Documentation.

Task Group Membership

Ben Abrahamse, MIT Libraries (SCT Representative, Co-Chair)
Kathleen Burlingame, University of Pennsylvania (LD4 Ethics in Linked Data Affinity Group Representative)
Keno Catabay, University of Colorado Boulder (ACDEI representative)
Laura Daniels, Cornell University Library
Michelle Gibeault, Smith College Libraries (ALA Intellectual Freedom Committee, Privacy Subcommittee representative)
Dina Herbert, National Archives and Records Administration (Feb. 2024 -)
Junghae Lee, University of Washington (SCS Representative, Co-Chair)
Tricia Mackenzie, Library of Congress (LC representative)
Alexandra Provo, New York University (LD4 Ethics in Linked Data Affinity Group Representative)
Michael Stewart, University of Delaware (PCC TG on Gender representative)
Anne Washington, OCLC (OCLC Representative, IMAC Liaison)
Thomas Whittaker, Indiana University Libraries

Past membership

Jerry Simmons, National Archives and Records Administration (Nov. 2023 - Jan. 2024)