

Chapter 12

Name Authority Control Paradigm Shift in the Network Environment

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this chapter is to give an international perspective and overview of the theory, standardization processes and following practices in the field of authority control, with particular view on the name authority control since the 1960s to the present. In the focus of interest of this chapter is paradigm shift in the field, and the possibilities of semantic web technologies in meeting library users' needs, as well as librarians' tasks to produce tools convenient to the user in the network environment.

INTRODUCTION

The theory and practice of Universal Bibliographic Control (UBC) of published intellectual and artistic production belongs to the field of organization of information within library and information science. The significance of the topic of name authority control, as part of the information organization which comprises bibliographic and authority data control can be viewed as the one which over-passes the boundaries of library, and, indeed, heritage institutions community. Today, practically every type of service depends, in one way or the other, on retrieving information provided through the

World Wide Web infrastructure. As we are faced with the explosion of information on the web, what we need at the end of a day is authoritative and authentic data. Libraries and other heritage institutions traditionally provide such data. Those institutions, however, are faced with the problems of how to process the ever growing quantities of traditional media as well as web resources in efficient and effective ways, and how to make them available globally to all for professional and/or private use, education or entertainment. Libraries in particular are challenged by the Internet information providers such as Google and Amazon which draw library users away from their services due to providing links to instantly available resources. However, it is exactly that those Internet

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-61692-012-8.ch012

information providers are ever more becoming aware of the need to retrieve, if not incorporate, vast amounts of organized information provided by heritage institutions into their services, while at the same time the heritage institutions seek the ways how to include their services into those of Internet information providers.

Without control of a name: whether personal, corporate body, work, place or topic, there would not be a successfully performed search nor retrieval of information from catalogues, bibliographies, lists, full text databases, etc. in any format or form of a service, as indeed of information provider services of various kinds. International agreements that started within the library community defined mechanisms to control the forms of names with the aim of recording national production of publications and exchange of authority data in line with economic and efficient management.

The theoretical foundation of the concept of Universal Bibliographic Control was straightforward: bibliographic description which comprises of bibliographic and authority data should be created in the source of its origin, such as a national bibliographic agency, and made publicly available. As part of that description, and represented by authority data, a bibliographic entity, whether a person, corporate body, topic or some other entity of interest to the user of a bibliographic service, should be represented by one form of a name, and that form of name should be established by the bibliographic agency of the entity's origin. The aim of the UBC is to enable any user anywhere in the world in any of bibliographic sources (e.g., catalogue, bibliography, list) to find all the works (in whatever manifestation) by the chosen entity collocated under that one form. The efficiency of the concept for the user (not to mention the economy for libraries due to adopting already processed authoritative data into their services) is obvious: searching one or more distributed catalogues would get all the works by an entity (e.g., personal author) under one authorized form of name regardless of the form of name s/he started

her/his search with, as all forms would point to that one (nationally and internationally) agreed upon name. In other words, the user would not find her or himself in a situation where s/he would not know when to stop her/his search (S.M. Malinconico), i.e., under what other forms of name s/he would yet have to search!

The period between 1961 and 1991 in which the concept of UBC and appropriate bibliographic tools were developed by International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) is described in the first part of the chapter.

There are a number of reasons why such an ideal could not have been realized, yet the majority of them could be subsumed to one: the basic principle of information organization is the convenience of the user, so the form of the name should be adapted to user's expectations. And although it is a common understanding that the user of contemporary bibliographic services in a global information environment could be anyone (as indeed, it could have been in the UBC modelled environment, but, it must be admitted, under significantly more restricted circumstances), and that the (proclaimed) aim of these services is indeed to reach everyone, they are built to address the needs of those that are closest – the local community.

The second part of the chapter deals with development of ideas, concepts and tools as a reaction to these developments since the beginning of the 1990ies to the present. The divergence from the UBC concept was brought to the full attention of IFLA not primarily because of the lack of libraries meeting their users' needs, but because of the noticed lack of international exchange of authority data, the production of which was considered the most resource consuming library processing task. The reaction to the situation was prompt: two analytical studies sponsored by IFLA presented a blueprint of the problem and recommendations. The result of IFLA's answer to these recommendations was basically the recognition of the paradigm shift in practices in the field of name authority control. IFLA also recognized

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