

Society of American Archivists  
Annual Meeting  
New Orleans, LA  
August 20, 2005

Session: Making a Contribution: Archives Catalogers' Participation in NACO and SACO

### **Archival Name Authority in a Library Setting**

Susan Hamburger, Ph.D.  
Manuscripts Cataloging Librarian  
The Pennsylvania State University

\*\* With thanks for sharing their searching tips, I gratefully acknowledge the original catalogers on the Penn State Special Collections Cataloging Team: Annie Copeland, John Hamilton, and Ken Robinson. \*\*

#### **Background**

I am in the unusual position of being both an archivist and librarian, straddling the three-legged stool of cataloging archival and manuscript collections, creating the name authority headings for these records, and reviewing and approving the name authority work of fellow catalogers of materials in a variety of formats. I am also the sole creator of EAD finding aids at Penn State, but that is a tale for another day.

At Penn State, the Technical Services department organized itself into a team structure based upon format (cat marking, monographs, music and AV, maps, rare books, and serials) on April 1, 1996 when I was still working in the Special Collections Library but maintaining a dotted-line relationship with Cataloging Services. Prior to the hiring of the current head of Cataloging and my subsequent move from Special Collections to Cataloging in 2001, the Team currently responsible for cataloging all of the Special Collections materials in all formats cataloged only rare books. Penn State had a homegrown catalog system, LIAS (Library Information Access System), which did not

support authority work. The maps cataloger and I were the only ones who cataloged directly into OCLC to ensure our records made it into the national database because LIAS did not include all the required fixed fields; both OCLC and RLIN rejected our records during tape loads.

Cataloging Services decided in 1998 that Penn State would begin to contribute name authority records to the Library of Congress Authority File (hereinafter referred to as LCAF) and the first group of ten catalogers received training that July. As we mastered the intricacies of NACO (Name Authority Cooperative Project) requirements, we decided to institute an initial review process internally before submitting our names for review to our external trainer. The core group prevailed through the separate review periods for personal names and corporate names, and opted to continue internal reviews of every NACO record prior to submission directly to LCAF. Two of us divided up this responsibility.

### **An Archivist in Charge?**

How did I, an archivist and manuscripts cataloger, with a semi-formal tie to the Cataloging department, become one of the two last-stage reviewers and arbiters of quality control for name authority contributions? As John Lennon used to say, “You might well arsk.” Since my frustrating days at the Virginia State Library and Archives (now the Library of Virginia) trying to standardize the formulation of names for our catalog records in VTLS (the local OPAC—online public access catalog) and RLIN—in counterpoint to a staff member of the Tayloe family who insisted we could NOT use the

LC established form of Taylor since the Tayloes and Taylors were not the same lineage—I've been a strong proponent of name authority and standardization, not only at the local level but especially for records in the national databases. Sure, the genealogists want to find the one family with the anomalous spelling of their last name, but other researchers prefer the concatenation into one standard version so they don't have to guess at all the possible, and often multiple, spellings in eighteenth century documents.

I'd been searching LCAF for years when creating my archival and manuscript catalog records, so it only seemed natural to join my Cataloging colleagues in the first training sessions. Many of the records I create are for lesser known stars in the Pennsylvania firmament, particularly those associated with Penn State, or are officers and rank-and-file union members for the labor archives collections, or are literary authors who may have some books published but were either not in conflict with another name or insignificant enough to the Library of Congress to warrant formally establishing the name in LCAF. Since arriving at Penn State in January 1994, I had a wealth of names in catalog records begging to be added to LCAF. And as an archivist, I kept a paper printout of every record I've cataloged so it was easy to go back and create name authority records for all those names.

I am generally a good editor. Typos jump out at me, screaming to be fixed. I don't see dead people, but I do see errors in coding, spelling, and the structure of name authority records. So, back in 1994, after refreshing myself on the AACR2 rules for how to establish names and cross references—especially tricky for corporate headings—during training, I volunteered to be one of the internal reviewers. Who knew what the workload would eventually grow to?

## **The Penn State Experience**

Even before I moved physically and supervisorily to Cataloging, the catalogers sent me emails with lists of NACO records to check. I requested that they group them into batches of at least, and no more than, ten records at a time. I found this number easy to review and respond with comments, especially if someone makes the same mistake repeatedly and I can advise them before they do it on twenty more records. This internal review makes for squeaky clean and correct LCAF records.

Originally, for eight of the fifteen librarians and staff who do original cataloging, I reviewed and approved the corporate and personal names headings created for NACO. With eight participating catalogers and a policy of internal review, as their productivity increased my workload tripled. Four of the most careful NACO creators agreed to review each others' personal name contributions while I continue to review the sporadic personal name headings of four catalogers, and the corporate headings for all eight.

When the Rare Materials Team was renamed the Special Collections Cataloging Team in 2001, it expanded its cataloging responsibilities to include books and serials from Historical Collections and Labor Archives and the Penn State University Archives. Thus, with my move to Cataloging, the Team sought other materials to catalog and that December I trained the three catalogers of original materials (one faculty librarian and two staff) how to catalog archival and manuscript collections. Starting with the one-folder author collections in Rare Books and Manuscripts, one staff cataloger creates 5-8 bibliographic records per week complete with sometimes one or more NACO records for

each bibliographic record. He and the other staff cataloger of original materials also create NACO records for campus building architectural plans bibliographic records. The new Rare Books Cataloger joined the Team in April 2001 and in the ensuing years has contributed NACO headings, primarily for two of our big projects, the Chris Gaines Memorial Library Collection (books, serials, and ephemera about the Amish) and the Pennsylvania German broadsides and Fraktur collection (which were cataloged individually, mostly).

Being physically located in Cataloging has benefits for NACO creation and review. We consult each other in person before and during record creation if there are questions or any uncertainty. I get to review names not only from the manuscript collections, but from books, conferences, serials, and maps—not all of them in English.

One of the big concerns during NACO training was if we'd have enough names to contribute every year to meet the minimum required by the Library of Congress. A second concern was would we maintain the interest and momentum to integrate name authority creation into our daily workflow. I am happy to say that with the increased and steady cataloging of archival and manuscript collections, and the willingness of the core catalogers from the first training sessions (four have since left Penn State) and other catalogers brought into the fold from the Monographs Team, we continue to be productive contributors to NACO. A few staff members resist participating, and we've not made it mandatory. For semi-active participants, we hold infrequent refresher training sessions, mostly for corporate and series headings. Fortunately, since I never encounter series with archival and manuscript collections, I do not review these LCAF

records; the Special Collections Cataloger, a former serials cataloger, handles this part of the review process.

Just how do archival and manuscript collections generate name authority records? I believe we have, if not a unique, at least a different kind of workflow between the Special Collections Library and Cataloging Services. Since I reversed my dotted-line relationship **from** Special Collections **to** Special Collections, I maintain close ties to my archival colleagues. I still process and create finding aids for some of the literary collections in Rare Books and Manuscripts, and process small, foldered collections for both the University Archives and Historical Collections and Labor Archives in preparation for cataloging them. I also catalog from completed finding aids which staff and student assistants in these three units create. From these collections and finding aids, I determine what entities (personal and corporate) warrant creating a name authority record. The other members of the Special Collections Cataloging Team catalog mostly small, foldered literary collections directly from the folders (with preliminary information supplied by a retired English professor volunteer), historical German toys and games, and folders of campus architectural plans. As they catalog, they too create name authority headings for each collection.

Now that we've moved from our homegrown LIAS catalog to Sirsi's Unicorn, for the first time we now have authority control in our local OPAC. This has created a workflow issue in keeping up with the monthly unmatched headings reports generated by OCLC/MARS (Machine Readable Authority Service). We rely on OCLC to run our monthly bibliographic tapeloads against the authority file and found that dividing up the reports among all of the original catalogers didn't work (consistency, workload, and level

of work). First one, then a second, staff cataloger assumed responsibility for correcting in the OPAC the unmatched headings from the list.

When OCLC developed their Web-based cataloging program, Connexion, they included some interesting features related to authority control. Under their old Z39.50 system called Passport, a cataloger had to search the authority file under a separate logon, and then either retype or copy-and-paste it into the bibliographic record under construction. With Connexion, there are two ways of doing authority control for a bibliographic record. One is to open another window to search the authority file while you have your bibliographic record open. The second way is to click on the button for “Edit Control Headings Single” that automatically searches the LCAF and inserts the correct controlled heading for the field on which you’ve put the cursor. If there is no exact match, the cataloger can select from a list of personal names, for example, to find the correct one, and modify the heading with qualifiers such as subfield e for recipient or correspondent. This feature has certainly both speeded up authority searching and guaranteed no typos in bibliographic records.

Creating authority records in Connexion is similar to Passport. In Passport we had a local macro set up to import the name and title of the work into the appropriate fields. In Connexion, OCLC has created a macro in the Tools button that does the same thing in six clicks instead of one—that’s progress! The catalogers save their records in the online file (rather than the local file which can only be accessed on that person’s computer) and send me an email with the list of numbers to check. Opening multiple windows in Connexion saves me time in proofreading these proposed authority records. Each cataloger decides whether or not to create a NACO record. But since our goal is to

provide as much standardized access as possible, we rarely decide not to establish a name. We base our decision to create a heading on several factors: the name conflicts with an established heading and we can differentiate between the two by the addition of birth and/or death dates, we feel a responsibility for authors whose manuscripts we collect and for Penn State-related names, and the opportunity to contribute a useful name that will appear in other Penn State collections and for the benefit of other repositories outside Penn State. We can choose not to create a heading if it is an obscure local person who has never published anything, or if there is no conflict with an established heading and we can't find out anything about the person that would provide substantive information. If all we have is a salutation to "Edith" or "Mr. Smith," that is not enough information to warrant a NACO record. We rarely add one of these folks to an undifferentiated heading listing all the different people with the same name and one publication written by each one. Outside of the one volume diary kept by a Centre County farmer in the 1880s, chances are the conflict will not be resolved, and cluttering up the record will not benefit catalogers in New Mexico.

### **Approaches to Researching Names**

How do we find out biographical information about the people for whom we've decided to create NACO records? The most obvious source is the collection itself when the processor has written a fully-fleshed out biographical note as part of the finding aid. But we are dealing with artificial collections for which there is no additional information accompanying the handful of letters, photographs, or blueprints. We are fortunate at



Penn State to have both an in-depth print collection and a robust licensing program for online subscriptions to electronic resources. The first places I usually start are the online versions of *Contemporary Authors*, *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, and *American National Biography*, and then broaden my search to *Biography and Genealogy Master Index* (BGMI). Surprisingly, the *Encyclopedia Britannica* is often useful for general personalities like politicians, military figures, and royalty.

For print references, the various *Who's Who* are both good general sources. There are various Oxford and Cambridge Guides to [fill-in-the-blank], and they often have minor figures in various disciplines. Print biographies are good, but many early ones are not indexed, or are incomplete, or have been superseded by better information; I try to pick a recent one, when possible. The Gale material online summarizes the various biographical perspectives, is updated frequently, and gives a more impartial picture; even biographies are often written with an agenda.

The literati loved to use pseudonyms and the best source for matching these to real names is *A Dictionary of Anonymous and Pseudonymous Publications in the English Language* by [Samuel] Halkett and [John] Laing. 3rd revised and enlarged edition (Harlow [Eng.]: Longman, 1980).

For specialized, subject-oriented people, I often find them only in discipline-related sources such as *New Grove Dictionary of Music Online*, and the Getty's *Union List of Artists' Names Online* <[http://www.getty.edu/research/conducting\\_research/vocabularies/ulan/](http://www.getty.edu/research/conducting_research/vocabularies/ulan/)>. Grove's covers all major and some minor personalities impartially, mentions family members and

influences, and is generally kept up-to-date. *The Dictionary of Art* is also very useful for artists. And let's not forget *Artist Biographies Master Index* and the premiere work, Bénézit's *Dictionnaire Critique et Documentaire des Peintres, Sculpteurs, Dessinateurs & de Tous les Temps et de Tous le Pays*. For deceased architects, we use the online version of *Brief Biographies of American Architects Who Died Between 1897 and 1947* <<http://www.sah.org/oldsite06012004/aame/bioint.html>>

For photographers, I consult the SAA Visual Materials Section Web page <[http://www.lib.lsu.edu/SAA/vm\\_bib.html#hgwpdb](http://www.lib.lsu.edu/SAA/vm_bib.html#hgwpdb)> for Richard Pearce-Moses' "A Photographic Archivist's Bibliography" section on Photographers (Biographies, Directories) which lists, among others, the first two that we own but not the third,

- Turner Browne and Elaine Partnow's *Macmillan Biographical Encyclopedia of Photographic Artists & Innovators* (New York: Macmillan; London: Collier Macmillan, 1983)
- Gary Edwards's *International Guide to Nineteenth-Century Photographers and Their Works* (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1988), and
- Ross J. Kelbaugh's *Directory of Civil War Photographers* (Vols. 1-3)  
Volume One: Maryland, Delaware, Washington, D.C., North Virginia, West Virginia; Volume Two: Pennsylvania, New Jersey; Volume Three: Western States and Territories (Baltimore, MD: Historic Graphics, 1990-1992).

At Penn State, we have the William C. Darrah Collection of Cartes-de-visite for which Mr. Darrah created a card file of photographers by name as well as by state. The cards don't give biographical information but do give street addresses and dates when the

photographer worked there which helps identify who, where, and when. Other local resources include an extensive biographical index card and vertical file on Penn State faculty. County histories from the 19th to early 20th centuries are a treasure chest of obscure biographical information. These have a wealth of information that one will never find in a national level biographical dictionary. We put a list of Pennsylvania county histories on our Web site for easy look-up.

As an alternative to published and subscription sources, the Internet can be a useful, if not always authoritative, source. Sometimes there is some good information available at *FamilySearch*, [http://www.familysearch.org/Eng/Search/frameset\\_search.asp](http://www.familysearch.org/Eng/Search/frameset_search.asp) the online genealogical database run by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, a site generally good for 18<sup>th</sup>- to early 20<sup>th</sup>-century data. Sometimes it has very little information, other times you can find links for a whole family tree. It also has 1880 census data, but you have to estimate the birth year because it only gives ages. So, it's hit or miss, but worth taking the time to search if you can't find a good biography.

When all else fails, we google the name. A Google search often turns up pages devoted to minor figures, many times a regional site or even a University's collection description. If you're lucky you might find a family genealogy (like at *RootsWeb.com* <http://www.rootsweb.com/>) or another library that has a strong collection on the same subject and has placed detailed biographical information on the Internet (such as Columbia University's William W. Appleton Collection of Early British Theater Letters 1773-1853 <http://www.columbia.edu/cu/libraries/indiv/rare/guides/Appleton/index.html>). We find

the Web to be generally lacking, but every now and then a good specialized Web page turns up. The *Famous Americans* site <http://www.famousamericans.net/>, based on Appleton's *Cyclopedia of American Biography*, is useful for pre-20th century Americans. We've been surprised at how useful the *Internet Movie Database* <<http://www.imdb.com/>> can be for certain performers and even authors. The *Political Graveyard* site <<http://politicalgraveyard.com/>> doesn't have much biographical data, but can confirm data or break a name conflict. But as with all things on the Internet, I can't stress enough the need to be careful about unvetted information on the Web.

## **Conclusion**

There are many permutations of relationships between archivists and their institution's cataloging department. In some, the entire operation from processing, finding aid creation, through cataloging resides within the Special Collections Department, such as at the University of Virginia. In others, the functions are highly compartmentalized such that one group of archivists creates the finding aid, and the technical services catalogers create the MARC record—or not. When I worked at Florida State University the division between Technical Services and Special Collections was very strict; the Special Collections librarians and archivists were not allowed to catalog manuscripts, but then again, the catalogers didn't bother with manuscripts either. The Virginia State Library and Archives had two parallel operations going—cataloging books and serials on the library side, and cataloging archives and manuscripts on the archives side. While the library now contributes to LCAF, the archives does not.

The institutions with cataloging archivists—those archivists who are also librarians with cataloging coursework and experience—and a work culture that fosters collaboration can integrate the archivists into an institution-wide program of cooperative contribution to LCAF. In a climate of inclusiveness and respect, and one not based on statistical bean-counting production quotas, archivists can add immeasurably to LCAF. As we're seeing with the development of Encoded Archival Context, archival creators are not unique to one institution's holdings. Local as well as national resources can help provide valuable biographical information for NACO records. By sharing the research already done during processing, archivists contributing to LCAF provide an authoritative source for fellow archivists, librarians, and researchers.