

Catalogers Group: Future of Series Authority Work at LC  
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Questions:

1. Do you think that it still useful to control series?
2. If so, what strategies could be used to open discussion with LC on the decision to abandon series control?

Discussion:

1. Importance of controlling series:
  - a. Community served by our records: In an academic library, faculty needs drive many of our decisions. Faculty (and therefore bibliographers) have a range of attachments to and use of series; these uses have been encapsulated over time in the cataloging rules. For example, the Music Library has many collections, has made many different decisions about the collections over the years; series authority records provide a mechanism for recording these decisions. If we follow LC, then in two years—once the number of uncontrolled records reaches a critical mass—how will the decision affect our relationship with faculty?
  - b. Access: Certain series present special problems in terms of finding items.
    - 1) Generic titles: For example, series with generic titles (e.g., Poesía) would retrieve many, undifferentiated entries. Out of 750 entries, how is the searcher to find the specific series being sought? Generic series titles are often important for research and need to be differentiated.
    - 2) Series/subseries: SARS have been useful in clarifying relationships
  - c. Identification of series that change over time: Series authority records are like serial records, pared to the essentials. Like serial bib records, SARS track changes in numbering, publishers, minor title changes, and relationships (earlier/later titles) that could affect identification of the items in a series.
  - d. Value of library linked to value-added services available through the library:
    - 1) One of the key value-added services that differentiate libraries from Google comes from authority records. Why should we give up this advantage by picking off series?
    - 2) Self-serve: Catalogs have historically been self-serve tools. LC's proposal, based on the assumption that "keyword is good enough," places the burden on searchers to identify all possible variants. In contrast, the browse search, enhanced with cross references from authority records, offered more implicit guidance. And once a searcher found a record, the hyperlinked series headings provide a way to find the rest of the group.
    - 3) Inventory: When a library only enters analytics (i.e., does not check in the series on a serial record), then the collocated series serves as an inventory, as a substitute for a check-in record.
    - 4) Organizing large result sets: FRBR & FRAR are just getting off the ground; how unfortunate if immediate short-term gains should undermine promising efforts
  - e. Acquisitions functions: If a library checks in a series (e.g., for standing orders), then the public can see what the library owns—at the top level. But how to get to a specific volume?
  - f. Authority vendors: Authority vendors make use of SARs to provide services to libraries. How will this change affect the vendor services?
  - g. Publisher/library collaborations: How does LC's decision affect the future of publisher/library cataloging collaborations, e.g., Casalini. If LC trains publishers to ignore series, will this training result in less useful records for libraries? How does LC's decision affect the value of PromptCat & other services that supply LC records?
  - h. Cultural differences: Certain publishing traditions may place more weight on series. One example is Japanese publications. The desire to class as a collection and analyze series for Japanese publications is a result of the recognition of series titles by faculty

2. Strategies for discussion
  - a. Background: Based on the LC proposal, to default to 490 0 untraced series, LC has decided it does not want catalogers to consult the authority file. It wants to abandon use of the authority file (at least for series)
  - b. Partnership: PCC is a partnership; for one partner to pull out unilaterally without consultation is troubling in itself. Moreover, LC's decision is of concern; and it should be discussed by the group. What is "trust" if a library can pull out of a cooperative group without consultation?
  - c. Unilateralism: LC could facetiously argue that its decisions are internal, and that any library wishing to continue to control series is free to do so. But given the use of LC records in our libraries, this is not so simple. There are serious implications for all of us, since we use LC's records.
    - Also, what about the burden for Cooperating libraries: there is cost factor to absorbing LC's change in a cooperative environment. If PCC libraries follow LC, then we would need to untrace series in the national record and customize records to trace series locally.
    - Weighting in utilities: What should be the weight of LC records? Until now, LC records have replaced member copy in OCLC; what should happen when LC no longer controls series?
  - d. Support for 'single enterprise' approach to cataloging: One of the aspects of BSTF that people generally said they liked is the 'single cataloging enterprise' concept. PCC is such a cataloging enterprise.
  - e. Evidence that series are being used: We get requests from Reference to correct series entries—from that we know that series ARE being used.
  - f. Finding a middle ground:
    - 1) Efficiencies short of abandoning control: Why not explore SARs & process to see what could be streamlined?
    - 2) Research: Studies of series use may yield useful data for a considered approach to revising series procedures. Perhaps certain disciplines rely more on series than others.
    - 3) Division of labor: What could we offer to the PCC partnership to meet LC half-way? If LC does not want to create SARs, could the LC staff at least trace all headings & then let PCC take the lead in creating SARs?
    - 4) Types of series: Is there a way to identify categories of series that are more likely to be important to control? E.g., what if we concentrated on authority records for numbered series? Or for series where wording in the access point differs significantly from that in the series statement?
    - 5) "Just in case" v. "just in time": Libraries other than LC have always had alternatives: don't have to trace series in BIBCO records; or don't even need to create BIBCO records. LC may need similar alternatives. What about considering "just in time" series authority records—created only as needed for references?
    - 6) Expanding participation: Becky Dean has suggested a two-tier approach to controlling headings in OCLC. NACO libraries would continue to play a role in creating full authority records. But others would also be capable of creating minimal authority records that would be 'starter' records. If something is valuable but costly, it becomes more affordable when the costs are shared, through a shared file.
    - 7) Corporate sponsorship: Would publishers be willing to support authority work?
    - 8) Leadership: If LC no longer wishes to provide leadership in quality metadata, then what other alternatives are available? Could OCLC play a greater role? (Certainly, OCLC recognizes the value of authority records)

3. Notes from the whiteboard:
  - a. It is useful to control series because...
    - 1) Generic series titles are important & need differentiation
    - 2) Serials → monographic series: record changes in practice; support collocation; facilitate browse headings search
    - 3) Check with faculty? Faculty have opinions about how series should be treated. Therefore, ignoring the need to record treatment decisions could have serious negative effects
    - 4) FRAR & FRBR
    - 5) Burden others in cooperative endeavor
    - 6) Series authority record serves to record numbering practice (for consistency); record publisher changes & history of the series; record title changes, title variants
    - 7) Series authority record clarifies series/subseries
  - b. Strategies to influence decision-making re SARs...
    - 1) Broaden participation in SAR creation
    - 2) Concern: should be discussed
    - 3) Cooperative group: no unilateral decisions
    - 4) Explore single cataloging enterprise
    - 5) Re-evaluate processes
    - 6) Study use of series
    - 7) Separate tracing series from SAR creation
    - 8) Limit SAR creation to some, not all, series: consider unnumbered v. numbered series; consider when uniform titles are needed
    - 9) Corporate sponsorship of series
    - 10) Classed sep series: is this more work than setting up a SAR?
    - 11) What do we do? Authority vendors?
    - 12) How will divergent LC catalog affect identification of resources, e.g., for ILL, or record-sharing? Will LC records continue to carry the same weight?
    - 13) Who can we trust?
    - 14) Leadership torch to pass to OCLC?

4. The text of the LC announcement follows.

**The Director for Acquisitions and Bibliographic Access Announces the Library of Congress's  
Decision to Cease Creating Series Authority Records as Part of Library of Congress Cataloging  
April 20, 2006**

The Library of Congress has determined that it will cease to provide controlled series access in the bibliographic records that its catalogers produce. Its catalogers will cease creating series authority records (SARs). The Library considered taking this step over a decade ago, but decided against it at that time because of some of the concerns raised about the impact this would have. The environment has changed considerably since then--indexing and key word access are more powerful and can provide adequate access via series statements provided only in the 490 field of the bibliographic record. We recognize that there are still some adverse impacts, but they are mitigated when the gains in processing time are considered.

As the Library was considering introducing this change, it was heavily swayed by the number of records that included series statements. Using statistics for the most recent year with full output of records appearing in the LC Database (fiscal year 2004) gives a sense of the impact on the cataloging workload:

Total monograph records created: **344,362**

Total with series statements: **82,447**

Total SARs created: **8,770** (by LC catalogers); **9,453** (by Program for Cooperative Cataloging participants)

As a result of the Library's decision, the following explains what catalogers will and will not do, related to series.

What LC catalogers will do:

- Create a separate bibliographic record for all resources with distinctive titles published as parts of series (monographic series and multipart monographs).
- Give series statements in 490 0 fields.
- Classify separately each volume (i.e., assign call number and subject headings appropriate to the specific topic of the volume).

(Imported copy cataloging records will have series access points removed and series statements changed to 490 0.)

What LC catalogers will not do:

- ! Create new SARs
- ! Modify existing SARs to update data elements or LC's treatment decisions
- ! Consult and follow treatment in existing SARs
- ! Update existing collected set records
- ! Change 4XX/8XX fields in completed bibliographic records when updating those records for other reasons

The Library's rationale includes:

- (1) Eliminates cost of constructing unique headings; searching to determine the existence of an SAR; creating SARs; and adjusting 8XX on existing bibliographic records.
- (2) Maintains current level of subject access.
- (3) In some instances, increases access because more titles will be classified separately
- (4) Maintains current level of descriptive access other than series. Uncontrolled series access will remain available through keyword searches.

The Library will be working with affected stakeholder organizations--OCLC, RLG, the Program for Cooperative Cataloging, and the larger library community to mitigate as much as possible the impact of this change.

***The Library will implement this change on May 1, 2006. The Cataloging Policy and Support Office is revising affected documentation to be reissued to reflect these decisions.***