**Authority Control Today: Principles, Practices, and Trends**

Authority control and the technologies that support its implementation continue to evolve; however, the underlying principles and purposes remain the same. Written primarily for a new generation of technical services librarians, this paper will introduce them to the importance of authority control in library database management, discuss its history, describe current practices, and introduce readers to current trends and issues in the field. Suggested readings for deeper study will be recommended.

This paper provides an understanding of the history of authority control in the context of the development of general cataloging practice, beginning with basic tenets for the creation and maintenance of a library catalog outlined by Cutter (1876) and the Paris Principles. Emphasis is given to the impact of library computerization, enabling more efficient cataloging and improved patron access.

Authority control will be explained in the context of cataloging activities and processes to describe information resources, including description, subject analysis and classification. Authority control is the process of establishing, through verification and validation, controlled forms of entities (i.e. people, places, corporate bodies, families, subjects, and genres) used in information resource description. This process creates a database of consistent, unique terms that includes variant terms, related terms, other associated attributes, and sources of information to disambiguate entities.

Libraries maintain their authority database (i.e. authority file) using a variety of means, including via batch loading, partnering with library vendors, participating in cooperative cataloging programs (e.g. PCC, NACO, SACO, etc.), and manually editing records one by one. Individual libraries create and maintain this authority database in connection with their integrated library system. Libraries also often need to consider how archival authority structures complement bibliographic authority records and how these can work together in their discovery system.

The importance of authority control lies in establishing and maintaining consistent, reliable, and unique terms. The authorized terms in the authority file act as a controlled vocabulary supporting users’ information retrieval needs by bringing precision to searches and collocating related materials in results lists. Examples of benefits to patrons and staff will be shown in the paper.

Current practices and technologies in authority control will be discussed including computer and networking technologies. The move towards the semantic web, linked data technologies, and identity management continues to shape the practices of authority control in libraries. This paper will also introduce the aim to connect library authorities to other real world entities through resources like VIAF, IMDb, Wikipedia, and ISNI. In addition to technological advancements, the paper will address issues relevant to the evolution of ethical authority control practice.

**Bios**

Greg Reeve is the Metadata and Identities Librarian at Harold B. Lee Library since 2019. Previously he worked as a web developer within the Library's IT division. His professional assignment includes filling the role as the library's NACO coordinator, processing name authority records, monitoring the quality and use of metadata within various library systems, and leading the library in its linked data efforts. His research interests include metadata governance, assessment, and implementation; authority control; and semantic web technologies.

Rebecca A. Wiederhold is the Technical Services Archivist at Harold B. Lee Library. She is responsible for cataloging the library’s manuscript collections and maintaining archival authority structures within the library’s archives management system. She currently serves as co-chair of Society of American Archivists’ Standards Committee. In her former life, Rebecca worked as a bibliographic services project manager and account representative with a library services vendor, gaining experience with vendor authority control and cataloging services.