**Conclusion**

With many changes on the horizon, the future of authority control practice will continue to evolve. The interconnected network of libraries, vendors, databases, and services that make up the authority control landscape of today, however, are supported by a foundation of principles and purposes that remain the same. Through good authority control practice, as uniformity and consistency of name, title, and subject access points is established and cross-references are included, the library database is better equipped to serve as a retrieval tool for materials by, about, or otherwise related to the subject of the patron’s information search.

Cataloging students may receive basic instructions on authority control in beginning or advanced cataloging courses, but learning how to perform authority work is more often accomplished on the job than in library school, especially to the level of competence that is required to effectively maintain good authority control.[[1]](#endnote-1) This expertise can be achieved through a combination of in-house instruction, attendance at workshops or online trainings, staying up to date on library literature related to authority control, and regular, practical application through mentored authority work during cataloging activities.[[2]](#endnote-2) Technical services librarians who are emerging from library school and entering the field today and others who want to refresh their knowledge require a practical understanding of the underlying principles of authority control and how their work impacts the library user’s experience with information resource discovery.

This article has sought to provide a foundational introduction to authority control, couched in the overall context of cataloging. With a basic knowledge of the history of authority control and a new understanding of the principles of current authority control practice, including both the content and encoding metadata standards that underpin the creation of authority records, readers have an introduction to authority control that can be built upon through a deeper exploration of the various issues and trends touched on in this paper. All librarians benefit from understanding that the relevance of library databases in meeting patrons’ information needs relies upon authority work well performed and library metadata systems that capitalize on standardized, unique and connected access points.

1. Rebecca L. Mugridge and Kevin A. Furniss, “Education for Authority Control: Whose Responsibility is it?” *Cataloging & Classification Quarterly* 34, no. 1-2 (2002): 235, <https://dx.doi.org/10.1300/j104v34n01_14>. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. A good starting place for those seeking training in authority work is the PCC NACO training site (<https://www.loc.gov/aba/pcc/naco/training/>). Textbooks like *Maxwell’s Guide to Authority Work* (Chicago: American Library Association, 2002) can also provide a basis for the principles and practices that must be learned. Familiarizing oneself with *Descriptive Cataloging Manual*  instructions for name and series authority records (DCM Z1) is also recommended (Library of Congress, “Descriptive Cataloging Manual, Z1,” October 5, 2020, <https://www.loc.gov/catdir/cpso/dcmz1.pdf>). Many workshops and classes are available for catalogers seeking to learn, especially through library associations and consortia and online courses such as those offered through Library Juice Academy. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)