

IFLA and Authority Control

Marie-France Plassard
IFLA UBCIM Programme

In 1974, at the UNESCO Intergovernmental Conference, one of the key recommendations put forward for long-term policy for UBC was the confirmation that each national bibliographic agency is responsible for establishing the authoritative form of the name of its country's authors, both personal and corporate, as well as authoritative lists of these.¹ And in 1977, one of the recommendations issued at the end of the International Congress on National Bibliographies organized by IFLA and UNESCO, stated that "each national bibliographic agency should maintain an authority control system for national names, personal and corporate, and uniform titles in accordance with international guidelines".²

Also in the late 70s IFLA initiated and sponsored many studies with the view of establishing an international system of authority control. Its work on standardization concentrated on two main areas: publication of international authority lists and formulation of international rules for the structure of authority forms.

International authority lists

Anonymous Classics (1978),³ based on *The International List of Uniform Headings*, lists uniform headings for European literatures. The publication is being revised by the IFLA Cataloguing Section and will be enlarged to cover other continents. *A List of Uniform Headings for Higher Legislative and Ministerial Bodies in European Countries* first appeared in 1975 and was revised in 1979.⁴

The List of Uniform Titles for Liturgical Works of the Latin Rites of the Catholic Church provides titles from the Council of Trent (1546-1563) to 1980.⁵

Names of States (1981) is an authority list of language forms for cataloguing entries.⁶ The national equivalent standards of original names are given in English, French, German,

¹ Anderson, Dorothy. *Universal Bibliographic Control: a Long-Term Policy, a Plan for Action*. Pullach bei München: Verlag Dokumentation, 1974.

² *Guidelines for the National Bibliographic Agency and the National Bibliography*. Prepared by the IFLA International Office for UBC. Appendix B, page 4. Paris: Unesco, PG1/79/WS/18.

³ *Anonymous Classics: a List of Uniform Headings for European Literatures*. Compiled by the IFLA International Office for UBC, edited by Rosemary C. Hewett. Based on: *International List of Uniform Headings for Anonymous Classics* compiled by Roger Pierrot. London: IFLA International Office for UBC, 1978.

⁴ *List of Uniform Headings for Higher Legislative and Ministerial Bodies in European Countries*. Compiled by the USSR Cataloguing Committee (for the IFLA Section on Cataloguing). 2nd ed. Revised. London: IFLA International Office for UBC, 1979.

⁵ *List of Uniform Titles for Liturgical Works of the Latin Rites of the Catholic Church*. Recommended by the Working Group on Uniform Headings for Liturgical Works. 2nd ed. Revised. London: IFLA International Office for UBC, 1981.

Russian and Spanish, now the official languages of IFLA (Spanish was not an official language at the time).

International rules

These were aimed at ensuring that the author's name is found in bibliographies and catalogued worldwide in a consistent way.

Names of Persons, first published in 1977, lists national practices for entry in catalogues. A major revision led to the publication of the 4th revised enlarged edition in 1996 (7).⁷

Form and Structure of Corporate Headings, published in 1980,⁸ aimed to promote uniformity in headings appearing in bibliographic records produced for international exchange within the framework of UBC. The IFLA Cataloguing Section started to update it in the 1990s, but then the focus shifted to the promotion of international sharing of corporate name headings in (national) authority files. The new publication, titled *Structures of Corporate Name Headings*,⁹ was posted on the IFLANET in January 2001.

Towards an international authority system

It was decided in 1978 to develop an international authority system and a working group was established for that purpose during the IFLA Conference in Strbské Pleso in former Czechoslovakia. Its terms of reference were the following:

- to discuss and formulate the specifications for an international authority system to satisfy the bibliographic needs of libraries
- to develop the UNIMARC format for authorities
- to develop methods for the efficient and effective exchange of authority data.

The first objective implied the elaboration of standards to stipulate the elements of the entry, give the order of these elements and specify a system of punctuation. It was achieved with the publication of the *Guidelines for Authority and Reference Entries*

⁶ *Names of States: an Authority List of Language Forms for Catalogue Entities*. Compiled by the IFLA International Office for UBC. London: IFLA International Office for UBC, 1981.

⁷ *Names of Persons: National Usages for Entry in Catalogues*. 4th revised and enlarged ed. München: K.G. Saur, 1996 (UBCIM Publications – New Series, v. 16).

⁸ *Form and Structure of Corporate Headings*. Recommendations of the Working Group on Corporate Headings, approved by the Standing Committees of the IFLA Section on Cataloguing and the IFLA Section on Official Publications. London: IFLA International Office for UBC, 1980.

⁹ *Structure of Corporate Name Headings*. Final Report, November 2000. Compiled and Introduced by Ton Heijligers. International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions, Universal Bibliographic Control and International MARC, 2001. <http://www.ifla.org/VII/s13/scatn.final2000.htm>.

(GARE) in 1984.¹⁰ Nearly ten years later, in 1993, *Guidelines for Subject Authority and Reference Entries (GSARE)* was published.¹¹

The GARE were designed for print and microprint only. Developments in new technology, as well as other considerations, dictated a revision of the guidelines. Although the concept of UBC was still present in the 1990s, there was a growing perception of the need to preserve cultural traditions. Since new technologies are supplying automated devices for linking all authority records created by various national bibliographic agencies, it seems no more mandatory to use the same form of headings in all countries. I shall come back to this shift later on. The new edition, published by K.G.Saur in 2001, and titled *Guidelines for Authority Records and References (GARR)*,¹² covers, of course, a wider range of media. It provides the specifications for authority and reference entries for names and uniform titles to be shared in print, microprint and machine-readable form. They have been updated to govern the display of authority information and references for all types of material, including legal and religious works, musical compositions and performances, manifestations/works by individual and multiple authors known under one or more titles, as well as serial publications. *GARR*, like the previous guidelines, deals only with the broader structure of entries and does not prescribe the actual form of headings, references, urls, since this information is considered the territory of national bibliographic agencies and those responsible for cataloguing rules.

To go back to the working group on an international authority system, its second objective, to develop the UNIMARC format for authorities, was entrusted to a Steering Group created in 1984 comprising members from the IFLA Cataloguing and Information Technology sections. This goal was achieved with the publication in 1991 of the first edition of *UNIMARC/Authorities* (in the Saur UBCIM New Series),¹³ which started with this introductory statement: “The primary purpose of *UNIMARC/Authorities* is to facilitate the international exchange of authority data in machine-readable form among national bibliographic agencies”.

The third objective was to develop methods for the efficient and effective exchange of authority data. In a report sponsored by a Robert Vosper Fellowship and published by Saur in 1993, *International Cooperation in the Field of Authority Data*,¹⁴ Françoise Bourdon, from the Bibliothèque nationale de France, made a detailed analysis of the situation and gave recommendations. She insisted on the need to have proper terminology

¹⁰ *Guidelines for Authority and Reference Entries*. Recommended by the Working Group on an International Authority System, approved by the Standing Committees of the IFLA Section on Information Technology. London: IFLA International Office for UBC, 1984.

¹¹ *Guidelines for Subject Authority and Reference Entries*. Working Group on Guidelines for Subject Authority Files of the Section on Classification and Indexing of the IFLA Division of Bibliographic Control. München: K.G. Saur, 1993 (UBCIM Publications – New Series, v. 12).

¹² *Guidelines for Authority records and References*. Revised by the IFLA Working Group on GARE Revision. Formerly Guidelines for Authority and Reference Entries. München: K.G. Saur, 2001 (UBCIM Publications – New Series, v. 23).

¹³ *UNIMARC/Authorities. Universal Format for Authorities*. Recommended by the IFLA Steering Group on a UNIMARC Format for Authorities. Approved by the Standing Committees of the IFLA Sections on Cataloguing and Information Technology. München: K.G. Saur, 1991 (UBCIM Publications – New Series, v. 2).

¹⁴ Bourdon, Françoise. *International Cooperation in the Field of Authority Data: an Analytical Study with Recommendations*. Translation from the French by Ruth Webb. München: K.G. Saur, 1993 (UBCIM Publications – New Series, v. 11).

when defining the data suitable for international exchange or identifying the organizations equipped to produce these data. "If we are to ensure that the great diversity of computer systems used to run automated names authority files becomes a source of richness rather than confusion, we must be able to refer to their contents unambiguously".¹⁵ Indeed terminology has been a source of concern for many years within IFLA. The translation of the word "authority" into Russian, for example, was the theme of a lively discussion during an International Seminar on Authority Files held at the National Library of Russia in St. Petersburg in 1995. The working group on the revision of GARE had taken this need for unambiguity into consideration when reviewing and enlarging the "definitions" for the new edition. A working group within the Section on Cataloguing is addressing this problem in a more general way since it works on a "Multilingual Dictionary of Cataloging Terms and Concepts". It is chaired by Monika Münnich (from the University Library in Heidelberg), who presented the project at the IFLA Conference in Boston.¹⁶

Françoise Bourdon had also examined the role of the ISADN, the International Standard Authority Data Number, which should make possible to indicate an identity unambiguously on an international level unimpeded by language barriers.

At the end of the International Seminar on Authority Files (1995) already mentioned, several recommendations were addressed to UBCIM, including "that it resume work to facilitate the international exchange". A UBCIM working group launched in 1996 and chaired by Barbara Tillett was charged with reconsideration of this international system and creation of the ISADN. However, this Working Group on Minimal Level Authority Records (MLAR) and the ISADN started to discuss issues in a different light. I have already mentioned the shift from the traditional approach to a new perception dictated by the fact that new technologies are able to supply automated devices for linking all authority records, making it seem not mandatory any more to use a single authorized form of heading everywhere in the world. In fact, this new approach to UBC recognizes the needs of users who can display the script/language of their own countries while the National Bibliographic Agencies (NBAs) are still responsible for control in their own regions.

The WG remained informed of similar developments, for example the European Project Author which developed remote access to multiple authority files. Five participating national libraries were involved (Belgium, France, Portugal, Spain and the UK) whose names authority files (names of persons and corporate bodies) were made available in UNIMARC.

The Working Group's final report¹⁷ suggested that the international sharing of authority information would greatly assist libraries and national bibliographic agencies in reducing the costs of cataloguing and insisted on the usefulness of facilitating the international sharing of data. It recognized, however, that it was unrealistic to require that everyone use the same form of headings and that it was important to allow the preservation of differences in authorized forms of headings, which should best meet the language and

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 33.

¹⁶ Münnich, Monika. "Progress on the Multilingual Dictionary of Cataloging Terms and Concepts". *International Cataloguing and Bibliographic Control*, 31(2), pp. 31-33.

¹⁷ *Mandatory Data Elements for Internationally Shared Resource Authority Records*. Report of the IFLA UBCIM Working Group on Minimal Level Authority Records and the ISADN, 1998.
<http://www.ifla.org/VI/3/p1996-2/mlar.htm>.

cultural needs of the users. The report listed data elements which are mandatory when applicable for an internationally shared authority record. They are the following:

- record status
- type of record
- entity category
- encoding level
- record identifier/ record control number
- International Standard Authority Data Number (ISADN)
- date entered on the file
- version identifier
- language of cataloguing
- character set/s
- script of cataloguing
- description rules
- source agency for the record
- differentiated and undifferentiated personal name
- authorized heading
- nationality of entity (can be “undetermined”)
- variant forms of the authorized heading (“see” references)
- related authorized heading (“see also references”)
- source citation note

Highly recommended are:

- bibliographical, historical, or other information about the entity
- source data not found
- general notes.

The members of the WG proposed that each National Bibliographic Agency (NBA) make its authority files available on the Internet using the IFLA homepage to register current information about what is available and what restrictions are in force. Access to the files should be ‘Read only’. The exercise is limited to authority records for names of persons, corporate bodies, conferences and for uniform titles. It omits series, subject headings and classification authorities.

The Group made recommendations to various other working groups including the one working on the revision of GARE and to the Permanent UNIMARC Committee (PUC) preparing the second edition of the UNIMARC format for authorities which was published in 2001.¹⁸ The revisions reflect developments in telecommunications and information technology. The new edition incorporates the recommendations of the MLAR Working Group on the definition of data which should be mandatory in all authority records in order to facilitate exchange and re-use of authority records. Appendix 0: Format Changes mentions this consistency with the recommendations of the MLAR Working Group and extension of the format to facilitate links to electronic material thus promoting international exchange of authority data.

Concerning the ISADN, the members of the MLAR WG had decided that the concept should be reviewed later on. They had concerns about the cost and about the

¹⁸ *UNIMARC Manual – Authorities Format*. 2nd revised and enlarged edition. München: K.G. Saur, 2001 (UBCIM Publications – New Series, v. 22).

infrastructure needed to maintain such a system (the creation of a new registration authority). They thought that technological developments should be watched and that IFLA should cooperate with the archival community, with other professional associations and with publishers. A new Working Group was created in 1999, Functional Requirements and Numbering of Authority Records (FRANAR), which will be presented by Glenn Patton.