

ALA Annual Conference
Report from Program for Cooperative Cataloging (PCC)
Anaheim, CA, June 24, 2012
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Agenda at <http://www.loc.gov/aba/pcc/>

The PCC Participants Meeting at ALA Annual 2012 consisted primarily of a panel of speakers reacting to the paper “[The Future of Undifferentiated Personal Name Authority Records and Other Implications for PCC Authority Work](#)” by John J. Riemer and Philip E. Schreur, followed by an open forum to gather community input on the proposal to change the handling of undifferentiated personal names in the LC/NACO Authority File.

PCC Chair Linda Barnhart introduced the topic at hand and noted that the body of records in question is relatively small—less than 1% of the NAF, or about 58,000 records.

Paul Frank from Library of Congress presented the results of a survey of people at LC; of 18 respondents, the majority was in favor of splitting up the records, some with qualifying remarks, while a minority opposed it.

Brief presentations from the panel speakers followed. The speakers were:

- Thom Hickey (VIAF)
- Karen Anderson (Backstage Library Works)
- Sarah Elman (CJK NACO funnel)
- Georgia Fujikawa (SkyRiver)
- Berit Nelson (Sirsi/Dynix)

Thom Hickey pointed out a few differences between the LC/NACO Authority File and the authority files of other contributors to VIAF. Where we create separate records for pseudonymous identities, other national libraries create just one. Also, some other national libraries are generally less careful about differentiating headings. He suspected that we would have to relax rules on constructing qualifiers in order to make the character strings unique, but that eventually we would rely on identifiers to make entities unique instead of qualifiers in headings.

Karen Anderson took the position that splitting up the records would be forward-looking and therefore advisable. She also noted the usefulness of identifiers.

Sarah Elman stated that proposed change is long overdue and would be beneficial to users and catalogers. However, she sees the need for a reliable mechanism for differentiating among headings so that the cataloger does not need to scrutinize many records in order to identify the desired heading. She raised the possibility of including the vernacular scripts, or other

information from the record, in the headings in order to differentiate them. She mentioned that some people feel that splitting up the records would be too much work or that we should wait until after RDA implementation.

Georgia Fujikawa supported splitting up the records because it would facilitate matching and linking headings in bibliographic records.

Berit Nelson supported splitting up the records for the benefits that this would bring to users and catalogers, but also noted that doing this would require making changes to the software used by local systems. She mentioned a willingness to consider or even participate in further research and advised that we should be sure that such a change in practice is justified before moving forward.

During the open microphone portion of the session, various members of the community spoke in support of changing the handling of undifferentiated personal names. One idea that was brought forth by several speakers was to move to unique identifiers sooner than later, rather than going to great lengths to construct elaborate headings just for the sake of creating unique character strings. Some raised concerns regarding how best to proceed with splitting up the records. It remains to be determined if a retrospective project would be undertaken to split up all the existing undifferentiated names, or if there would simply be a Day 1 where undifferentiated name records would no longer be created. The prospect of breaking up the records is daunting in terms of the sheer amount of work involved, especially considering that research is required not only to establish the separate entities but also to do maintenance on the headings in bibliographic records.

One of the authors of the discussion paper reminded the audience that the future is longer than the past, which is to say that implementing a solution to the problem of undifferentiated name headings would bring benefits that would outlast the drawbacks.