

ity records would be more complex due to the use of the already defined \$8 control subfield only when an entity has names in more than one script or, more rarely, language.

I believe her statement “Including links to other established headings in the record is also possible. . . .” (247) must mean: Including links in the record to established headings *in other records* is also possible. The reference in the next paragraph to “the last line in figure 1” should refer to figure 2.

It is not possible to define all the intricacies of multi-script authority control in even a long letter. An insoluble part of the problem is that a cataloger can determine the language of the item in hand to be cataloged, but not the language of every future catalog user. Basing the catalog’s definition on the notion that our cataloging rules are for English users only and concept of language-specific rules for language-specific catalogs will not bring about access equity for those seeking nonroman library resources.—*James E. Agenbrood, retired systems analyst, Library of Congress*

April 12, 2006

The purpose of my paper, “Scripts, Languages, and Authority Control,” and my original presentation in 2003, was to shift the focus of discussion on the use of nonroman scripts in library data from the scripts themselves to languages.

In October 2005, the ALCTS Executive Committee established the Task Force on Non-English Access to address “access to library resources in all languages and scripts” (www.ala.org/ala/alcts/alctspubs/alctsnewsletter/vol16no5/announcements/TFnonenglish/tfnoneng.htm). That is, the ALCTS Executive Committee recognizes that a key issue for ALA is providing library service to people who use a language other than English, whether the language is written in a nonroman script or not.

In his letter to the editor, Mr. Agenbrood covers two topics: “English” headings, and his view on how an authority record should be structured.

Using foreign language names or terms in an English language environment is normal practice—just read any newspaper written in English! Similarly, headings established according to AACR2 for a catalog to be used by people who read English may include, or consist entirely of, names or terms from a foreign language (sometimes converted to Latin script by romanization). So in an English language environment whether the words are written or spoken, borrowings from foreign languages may occur.

How are foreign names or terms occurring in headings formulated according to AACR2 incorporated into a catalog? In an English-language environment, the ALA Filing Rules is the usual standard for ordering bibliographic records. The rules do provide for separate ordering of text in “nonroman alphabets,” but, as Mr. Agenbrood noted (in the third paragraph of his letter), access points defined by AACR2 “must be in the roman script” (that is, Latin script).

Foreign language text written in Latin script is not given special treatment under the ALA Filing Rules. What would be significant differences in the language of origin are either ignored or converted to English alphabet equivalents, so that foreign language text can be forced into the A–Z order of English. But, of course, this is the order expected by people who read English, so this cavalier treatment of foreign language text is understandable in what I called an “English-speaking locale.”

The second part of Mr. Agenbrood’s letter (beginning with paragraph 6) takes issue with the model for MARC 21 authority records presented in my paper, and describes an alternative with the following features:

one authority record for each entity (person, corporate body, etc.) with an authorized form in as many scripts and languages as the entity has on titles pages of items in a library’s collection.

An authorized heading would have references from variants in the same script or languages using that script.

The MARC 21 Format for Authority Data specifies that the data elements identifying the descriptive cataloging rules (008/10) and subject headings/thesaurus (008/11) used to formulate the 1XX heading are singly occurring. To accommodate the multiple authorized forms that his model contains, Mr. Agenbrood proposes: “Were the cataloging rules expanded to allow nonroman script access points there would be no problem identifying the rules used in the MARC authority format field 008, fixed length data elements the single character position would suffice.”

The record model proposed by Mr. Agenbrood will not work unless the cataloging rules are expanded to allow nonroman access points. Whether this will happen is questionable, given the Joint Steering Committee for Revision of AACR: RDA’s (JSC) current focus on resource description and access (RDA) as well as the history of a previous attempt. In 2000, ALA submitted a proposal to JSC: to modify AACR2 to provide an option for assigning nonroman access points. The ALA proposal had its origin in a proposal submitted to the Committee on Cataloging: Description and Access (CC:DA) by Mr. Agenbrood in 1999. The “Outcomes of the Meeting of the Joint Steering Committee Held in Washington, D.C., USA, 2–4 April 2001” (<http://www.collectionscanada.ca/jsc/0104out.html>) report that the ALA proposal “was greeted with largely negative responses.” In 2001, ALA withdrew its proposal.

There are many other problems with the record model. For example, it is unclear whether the proposed alternative authorized forms are language- or script-based. Mr. Agenbrood writes: “An authorized heading would have references from variants in the same script or languages using that

script” and about linking of fields “to cluster authorized headings and their references in the same language or script.”

In 1993, I examined linking of alternate graphic representation in authority records rigorously (“Linking of Alternate Graphic Representation in USMARC Authority Records,” *Cataloging & Classification Quarterly* 18, no. 1 [1993]: 27–62). This was where I came to the conclusion that it is better to have multiple authority records (each with its own source of authority) than a record containing multiple preferred headings with accompanying syndetic structures. Mr. Agenbroad prefers a single, multistructured authority record, asserting that “Simultaneous display of authority records would be even more complicated.”

I would think that each authority record could be viewed in its own window, tiled or stacked as the cataloger chose. But most of the time, the cataloger will be dealing with a single authority record, created in accordance with the source of authority used by the cataloging agency. In this record, variants of the preferred form, in any language and script, will be seen from tracings (see figure 3 in my paper, for an example). With respect to alternate graphic representation (880 fields) in authority records, I demonstrated in my 1993 paper that script-based linkage in authority records was inappropriate.

Mr. Agenbroad asks whether “including links to other established headings in the record” means “including links in the record to established headings in other records.” Because only one established heading is shown in figure 3, and the following sentence begins “The 7XX fields, heading

entry linking fields,” this is indeed what is meant. As for the erroneous “figure 1,” it was in my proof corrections, but must have been overlooked.

With respect to Mr. Agenbroad’s concerns about “access equity for those seeking nonroman library resources,” the problem is broader than that, and has two parts. Access needs to be provided to library resources in all foreign languages, regardless of script. For example, Modern Vietnamese is written in Latin script, but few library systems display Vietnamese text correctly. The other side of access equity is providing library service to people whose primary language is not English. Public libraries that serve multilingual communities are leaders in this work.

If we are going to provide optimal library service to all, regardless of language, we need to understand that most scripts are used to write more than one language. We therefore need to focus on support for specific languages, including being able to write them in their correct script(s), rather than focusing on “nonroman scripts.” We also need to keep in mind that it will soon be possible to include additional scripts in authority records. This opens up the prospect of being able to mediate searches in any language and its correct script via a library’s authority file (provided that see from tracings in those languages and their scripts are present). Exactly how authority records containing scripts other than Latin will be structured for MARC 21 exchange will be determined by the Library of Congress.—*Joan Aliprand, independent researcher*