ALA Midwinter Meeting 2015, Chicago
Report from ACIG (Authority Control Interest Group)
Submitted by Ray Schmidt, Chair, MLA-BCC Authorities Subcommittee

Library of Congress Update
Janis L. Young, Library of Congress, Policy and Standards Division

Cataloger’s Desktop has a new single search box interface, although users can still access the table of contents. Bruce Johnson at LC is interested in getting feedback, which may be sent to bjoh@loc.gov.

Planning for the BIBFRAME pilot began in late 2014. Contributors to the pilot will be catalogers in the Acquisitions and Bibliographic Access Directorate (ABA) and in the Moving Image, Broadcasting, and Recorded Sound Division. Multiple languages, scripts, and formats will be represented. The pilot will begin no earlier than April 2015.

Descriptive Cataloging of Rare Materials (Graphics) has been updated by the ACRL Rare Books and Manuscripts Section (RBMS), and has been made available at http://rbms.info/dcrm/dcrmg as well as in Cataloger’s Desktop.

The PCC RDA Authorities Phase 3 Task Group, charged with planning and implementing changes to the LC/NACO authority file to bring it into alignment with RDA, completed Phase 3a in January 2015. About 190,000 authority records were updated. Changes included:

- changes to medium of performance in subfield $m in music access points (converting standard combinations of instruments into equivalent strings) and generating a 382 field
- modification of some personal names 100 $c
- addition of 667 note to undifferentiated personal names
- recoding of 678 fields as 670s when the information contained is intended for catalogers rather than public display
- generation of 046 fields from fuller birth and death dates in 670 fields

Phase 3b will occur in summer 2015. Details about phase 3b revisions are available at the Northwestern University website http://files.library.northwestern.edu/public/rdaphase3/docs.

The email address LCHelp4RDA@loc.gov has been retired; RDA-related questions should be sent to policy@loc.gov.

The RDA Toolkit’s October 2014 release included 4 new and 19 revised LC Policy Statements. The next update (February 2015) will add Policy Statements that integrate PCC requirements from BIBCO and CONSER records.

There are significant developments for three major groups of genre/form terms. 175 “general” genre/form terms (dictionaries, encyclopedias, handbooks, etc.) were approved by LC in January 2015. However, there are no plans for a wholesale policy change to cancel LCSH form subdivisions used in subfield $v$. In February 2015, LC will be approving 560 terms for music in time for the MLA meeting; approximately 150 additional terms are still under consideration. Work on these terms was done in partnership with MLA’s BCC Form/Genre Task Force. 390 literature terms will be approved in March 2015.

**Advocating for Authority Control**
Ray Schmidt, Wellesley College, and chair of MLA BCC Authorities Subcommittee

Schmidt presented the [Music Library Association’s Statement on Authority Control](#) (issued in 2009) as an approach to advocating for authority control. He outlined some of the key elements of the statement, particularly noting its emphasis on collocation and disambiguation, and the statement’s illustrations of these principles in commercial and non-library settings. Schmidt considers the MLA statement to be a framework that can be used by others to come up with examples tailored to their institution, to communicate directly and clearly what authority control can do for their users.

Schmidt described various scenarios in which there is a need for advocacy. Administrators, and even catalogers, worry about the time investment in authority control due to pressure concerning backlogs. Another long-standing challenge is ensuring that integrated library systems meet the requirements of indexing and display of access points in bibliographic records in relation to authority records.

Beyond these well-known issues, an opportunity for advocacy arises when libraries accept donations of books and media for their collections. Donors of collections often have existing lists or databases of the items in their collection, and may not realize why cataloging must be done within the library to ensure that access points are properly integrated with the rest of the library catalog—it isn’t just a matter of data entry. Sharing information with the donor about what is involved in cataloging the new collection demonstrates the library’s enthusiasm and commitment to stewarding the collection and enhancing the ability of library users to find these items.

Many digital collections platforms (institutional repositories, image galleries) are marketed as having “authority control” functionality, but often this is limited to tools for collocating under a single form of name. What is missing is a cross-reference structure where variants point users to the preferred name. Schmidt suggested that vendors need to be educated about how the lack of a cross-reference structure affects the user experience, and that this can be emphasized in terms of the names of faculty—an audience that IR vendors care about.

Schmidt concluded by stating that we expect entity attributes in authority records to be fully exploited in a future linked data environment, but even in the current MARC environment, developers of new library management systems and web-scale discovery
tools should be urged to make use of the rich data that is now being recorded in authority records.

Versioning for Authorities
Diane Hillmann, partner in Metadata Management Associates LLC

Hillman began by examining assumptions about authority control, stating that a name authority record is a record for a person’s name and where the name came from, it is not a record that describes the actual person. Hillman considers this a limitation: in the NAF, SAF, or VIAF, records contain useful information, but they don’t identify the person. Furthermore, rules for library authority control don’t support references and “outlinks” well (although some NARs do include Wikipedia links).

Hillman presented examples of versioning in VIAF and id.loc.gov records. At the bottom of a VIAF record is an arrow pointing to an RSS feed for changes, but it isn’t clear what has changed. In the id.loc.gov record for “adapter” from the MARC list of relator terms, the “change notes” show the date that the record was modified, but again there is no way to see what changed, or how many changes have been made.

Hillman then discussed two newer name ID systems, ORCID and ISNI. ORCID was developed from science publisher files, because most scientific articles list authors only by surname and forename initials. An ORCID ID, allows authors to provide information about their education, employment, a resume and other professional activities, including papers. Hillman pointed out that an ORCID ID is for a person, not a record. It encourages linking in other databases with the ORCID identifier. ISNI (International Standard Name Identifier) is oriented more toward rights management. It is much more controlled; there are maintenance agencies who add the data to ISNI; authors cannot simply add their own data.

Thus, the NAF, ISNI, and ORCID are very different in the way data is created, what kind of data is used, and what kind of data is available to users. The NAF is centrally managed (i.e. LC distributes and re-distributes the records), allows expert input only, and the files are openly available. ISNI is centrally managed, allows some “improvement” by non-experts, and requires users to be signed in to add data. ORCID employs self-registration and allows content management by the account owner, and some “private” data is not available via public API.

Hillman observed that there are many flavors of version control, and that suppliers of services or data make their choices based on what they think people want, or on what they can provide simply or cheaply, such as: fine granularity at transaction level, dated URIs, last date only (unspecified changes), linked access to old versions, dated release number (and sometime diffs), and most recent raw file availability.

Semantic versioning (semver.rg), according to Hillman, can be used to bring automated version control to semantic information (elements, vocabularies, etc.) in the Open Metadata Registry or the RDA Registry. It involves a 3-tier numbering system expressed
as a version number that has three separate parts (x.x.x = major.minor.patch). “Major” is defined as breaking backward semantic compatibility; “minor” as a change in the semantics of any property of any element; a patch involves no change in the semantics of any element. Hillman showed an example in GitHub from the RDA Registry/RDA-vocabularies, demonstrating how users can see what changed and why. Hillman ended by urging a shift away from “handcrafting” what those working in authority control do to manage change, to move to the more automated version control environment commonly seen in the software industry.

Business Meeting
The meeting was called to order by ACIG Chair, Nathan Putnam (University of Maryland-College Park).

The group assessed the three presentations that had just given. It was noted that two of the speakers who were unable to attend due to the weather, Jeremy Myntti (University of Utah) and Nate Cothran (Backstage Library Works), plan to speak instead at ALA Annual. They will discuss the work of University of Utah’s J. Willard Marriott Library and Backstage Library Works on an automated solution for authorizing fields in digital library metadata.

Ideas were discussed for two additional presentations for ALA Annual. Possible topics include: ways that discovery platforms might make use of attributes in authority records or data; innovative ways that open-source systems might make use LC authority data without the involvement of commercial authority control services; a basic overview of VIAF; implementation of the LC Medium of Performance Thesaurus (LCMPT).

ACIG Secretary Mark Scharff (Washington University in St. Louis) announced that elections will take place at ALA Annual for a Chair-Elect, Secretary, and 5 Member-at-Large positions.