

WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHY?

ISAAR(CPF) - THE FORGOTTEN STANDARD?

TERESA DOHERTY

The Wellcome Library¹

Background – or an 'orrible history of cataloguing standards

In the beginning archivists wrote lists. Librarians may have catalogued but archivists *listed* their records. Sometime in the latter half of the twentieth century computers began to be used, and one or two archivists even caught sight of these strange lumbering beasts that dominated entire rooms, worked as 'main frames' and scared the living daylights out of one and all.

But some archivists saw computers and saw the future. Michael Cook turned his hand to the writing of the aptly named 'Manual of Archival Description' or MAD.² Cook dared to dream that archive offices up and down the country had work practices in common. Not only that, but if these practices were identified and standardised, archivists could one day work together, no matter what sector or what type of office they came from. Muttering heard from several quarters sounded something like this:

Standardisation - MAD! Librarians may have been able to standardise their work, but they only dealt with books. What about the difference between Egyptian papyri and modern company minute books, or Latin manuscripts and personal letters? Archives are unique and archivists require unique cataloguing structures to deal with them.

International standards in the 1990s

However, the mood changed and with comparable developments across the world there grew a critical mass of archivists who thought in a similar way. A few archives began to make their catalogues available in electronic format, but in the absence of archival standards had to make up their own or use existing library standards.³

In response to these developments, several international archival standards were agreed and disseminated. The International Council on Archives (ICA) issued the International Standard for Archival Description (General), or ISAD(G), in 1994.⁴ In 1996, the University of California launched 'Library Encoded Archival Description' (EAD).⁵ Whilst in 1995 'Dublin Core' was agreed by a range of information professionals.⁶ Together these three standards

became the core cataloguing tools for most archivists. ‘One-size-fits-all’ computer packages were designed and catalogues were created using the new standards; deviations that occurred in hard copy catalogues were highlighted and offices began the arduous task of transferring hard copy catalogues into electronic data. The standards began to be used across the UK, from small offices using simple word processing tools right up to the National Archives’ electronic catalogue PROCAT.

All these standards acted as ‘benchmarks’ to push the profession forward to a standardised form of cataloguing description, with the eventual aim of inter-operability. The change of mood was marked by the publication of two National Council on Archives (NCA) reports,⁷ which set out a vision of an active cross-sectoral UK wide archival network. Collaborative cataloguing projects - unthinkable without the standards - were successful in applications for funding, and became part of the professional mindset. From radical to mainstream, computers and standards had become part of the landscape.

Amongst the standards lurked the International Standard for Archival Authority Records (Corporate, Family and Person), or ISAAR(CPF), issued by the ICA in 1995. Yet for many archivists it has remained in the background.

So, why so little use of ISAAR(CPF)?

The take-up and active use of the ‘supporting’ information standards, such as ISAAR(CPF) - in other words, those standards relating to traditional finding aids such as indices - has been low. Offices have yet to convert all their existing catalogues and few institutions have their holdings available online. There are also vast amounts of un-catalogued archives awaiting cataloguing, which the computerised catalogues highlight through their absence. Expectations have risen (both for the archivist, related professions and users) and there is continued pressure to meet the demand. The archive community remains focused on core cataloguing crises. If we remember that most libraries had their catalogues computerised in the 1980s we as a profession still have a lot of catching up to do!

While this remains the case, developments for supporting information will remain limited, but this raises concerns that the archive community should be aware of.

Firstly, the ‘supporting’ information standards are *key* for fully inter-operable search facilities. Users are increasingly experienced at using online indices, mainly provided by the library community, and there is a general conviction that these provide the best method of searching. In other words, our users use and need the finding aids that we see as ‘supporting’ our catalogues.

Secondly, these indices are currently being created elsewhere in the heritage sector. Yet those of us with the primary textual sources are less actively involved. Archives that hold the records for ‘creators’ (people and corporations) are not currently involved in influencing how these creators are being indexed or described in biographies or histories. Surely this is a weakness?

Yes, but what is ISAAR(CPF)?

Issued only one year after ISAD(G) in 1995, the ‘International Standard for Archival Authority Records’ has not become as widely recognised or known as its counterpart. For many of us who were trained pre-1995, we may understand ‘international standard’, but what on earth is an ‘authority record’?

An authority record is ‘the authorised form of name combined with other information elements that identify and describe the named entity and may also point to other related authority records’.⁸

‘Authorised’ in this case means ‘definitive’; the record does not need to be exhaustive but to provide the name chosen to identify someone or something. This will also be the preferred name used for indexing and non-preferred names should be cross-referred to the authority name.

Some additional elements can be used to form the authorised name, such as dates, titles, and epithets. However, in ISAAR(CPF) there are also elements that can be used to form a biography or a corporate history.

Authority indices

Archivists have always created indices. The best finding aid ever, we had wooden drawers full of them. What did we index? Usually the ‘locators’ – who, what, when and where:

- Who – corporate, personal, family
- What – subject
- When – dates or events (such as the second world war)
- Where – place names

All can be created as indices, and answer users’ most frequently asked questions.

An authority index takes this one small step further, as it ensures that only one version of a name is indexed. This is particularly useful for those people or corporate bodies known by more than one name; with nicknames, pseudonyms and abbreviations proliferating we need

to be sure we are all talking about the same thing. Most authority index terms will include a date, so that, for example, 'John Smith (1848-1912)' can be distinguished from 'John Smith', his great grandson, or 'John Smith', his first cousin.

As well as ISAAR there are subject indices (thesauri) such as UNESCO,⁹ UKAT or the Getty Art & Architecture Thesaurus.¹⁰ Museums often create object thesauri, whilst many archive offices create place indices.

ISAAR(CPF) and indexing standards

ISAAR(CPF) does not set out specific rules for indexing, it simply states that an international indexing standard should be chosen and used! This makes perfect sense, except it presents the archivist with a quandary: which rule to use?

All indexing standards break down the authority index terms into 'sub-elements' or 'bits', such as forename, surname, title, pre-title, dates, epithet. Then different standards arrange these in different ways, and use different elements (for example, one standard might require an epithet while another does not). In many computerised catalogues the sub-elements appear as separate fields, and the computer programme automatically creates the authority index term according to a particular indexing standard. CALM cataloguing software, for example, creates authority names in accordance with the National Council of Archives Rules.

NCA Rules for Names

The UK standard is the National Council of Archives (NCA) Rules for the Construction of Person, Place and Corporate Names issued in 1997.¹¹ This was created after a period of intense discussion, whereby specialist rules from across the UK were compared and a standard produced.

Critically, the NCA Rules became the style by which the National Archives Historical Manuscripts Commission (NA:HMC) indexes catalogue entries submitted to them for inclusion in the National Register of Archives (NRA).¹² In addition, NCA Rules were adopted by Hampshire Record Office and therefore, as Hampshire was an early user of CALM cataloguing software and involved in its development, they became incorporated as the basic structure for indexing in CALM. Hence, by default, the NCA Rules have been adopted by many offices that use CALM.

From across the pond – the Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules

For the majority of users the NCA Rules have proved invaluable, but some offices they simply don't suit!

Many offices are restricted to the standard used by their parent body. This is frequently the case with archives within specialist libraries. For example, when the Wellcome Library chose the Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules (AACR2)¹³ for indexing, this directly influenced Wellcome's Manuscripts and Archives' decision on cataloguing rules.¹⁴ Choosing the same standard has enabled additional compatibility within the organisation and will enable future cross-domain collaboration within the Library as a whole.¹⁵

Other offices simply choose not to use the NCA Rules. One of the most frequently questioned aspects of the NCA Rules has been that of compound (double-barrelled) surnames. The NCA Rules indicate that the last name should be used for indexing, whereas many people wanted the first of the double-barrelled names to be the key index term. In archive offices that index the names of living people, such as the archives of professional membership bodies and institutes, individuals may want their surname indexed by the first rather than the final element. The Royal Society is one such example. Their members' biography database is available to current members and, in the early stages of the indices being made available online, members queried their names being entered 'incorrectly'.

But to what extent is it an issue for the archivist? For many, choosing a standard is a decision archivists are loathe to make, not wishing to make a decision that would be expensive or cumbersome to undo if required in the future. The simple answer is - as ISAAR(CPF) indicates - *it does not matter* which indexing standard is chosen. What is important is that a standard is chosen and applied so that indices are turned into authority records as soon as possible.

As for compatibility between systems, taking the Wellcome Library and the NRA as an example, it is much easier to achieve compatibility with the NRA if it is known that (a) Wellcome does not use the NCA standard and that (b), because it uses AACR2, the ways in which it deviates from NCA are predictable. Admittedly this is not perfect but, if archivists choose commonly used standards, mechanisms for inter-operability *will* be made available in time.

Authority records ('other information')

Authority records take the indexed term - the authorised name - and add some 'other information'. This 'other information' is basically that which would usually be found in the

main catalogue. Rather than have a field entitled 'biographical history' or 'administrative history', the authority record takes these details and puts them into a structured record.

Frequently asked questions

So what are the benefits to creating authority records as a separate database: why not leave it in the catalogue administrative history or biography field as set out in ISAD(G)?

The main reason is efficiency. If you have the personal records of a prominent person, you are likely to have additional material relating to that individual elsewhere in your archive. By creating an index entry for that person in a separate database, authority index entries can be linked to all the relevant entries in the main catalogue. Having a separate authority record means that biographical details need only be entered once, and the same information does not have to be repeated as background information (albeit in an abbreviated version) in subsequent catalogues.

Hence, the biographical details for '*James Brown, founder and proprietor*' do not need to be repeated in the early company papers' catalogue, his personal papers' catalogue and his son's papers' catalogue. It also removes the need to divide Brown's biography into personal and business aspects for the different catalogues.

By creating one coherent authority record the archivist only needs to update the authority record as necessary, rather than updating several records scattered throughout the main catalogue. There is also a subsequent benefit for researchers, who can navigate the catalogue more efficiently. If the researcher knows nothing of the subject of an authority record, they can stop and read the biography at the most appropriate opportunity. If the researcher does not want (or need) to stop and read the authority record as part of the catalogue they can skip it, knowing where to find it *easily* when required.

Corporate authority records – obvious benefit alert!

For business archives there are several benefits when using corporate authority records, such as when dealing with mergers and de-mergers.

- Where one company had several different, commonly used names (British Telecom or BT, British Home Stores or BHS, Marks & Spencers or M&S or Marks), the use of an authority index guides the reader into the authority record or the catalogue whilst informing them which of the terms is used for indexing. This also educates users in preferred terminology.

- Where the records of a company have been scattered across several catalogues or collections (for instance, because of the way functions were hived off into separate companies), authority records enable quick navigation for the user.
- Where a company was taken over by another, an authority index makes it easy to find the relevant company information. If subsidiary companies are catalogued within the parent company's catalogue the administrative history can be difficult for a reader to locate – is it at parent or subsidiary company level? This presupposes existing knowledge about the history of the organisation, the very information that the user may be trying to locate.

An authority record gives the reader key administrative or biographical history details immediately – the context is up front and obvious. With an authority index, the user is only ever one click away from the contextual information, wherever they are in a catalogue, however complex the collection is.

ISAAR(CPF) structure

So why do we need rules to structure the authority record? Firstly, the model of ISAD(G) proved to many that structure is useful: as a tool for professional standards, to improve cataloguing, to share information, to assist users. Whilst a balance needs to be struck between creating separate elements for the sake of it, most biographies or administrative histories do have an inherent structure. When writing a biography, for example, there are headings such as name, dates, place of birth, address, education and career. These may be given in different order or style but are common to most biographies.

The structure also acts as an aide-memoire. As catalogues have been retro-converted it has been interesting to note the repetition of key information in different catalogues and, conversely, key details that are missing from a biography or administrative history, that are generally known (such as dates).¹⁶ Often it is not that the detail is not known, rather that to the insider the details are obvious, whilst for the external researcher many hours could be lost researching the information.

Where to start?

As overworked archivists, who or which bodies should we choose to write about? The priority should be those bodies or people we hold the records of. Often archivists are tempted to give details for those for which frequent enquiries are made. But if we get frequent enquiries about a person or body that we do not hold the records of, then we need a clear

signpost telling researchers where the papers are, or where a useful authority record is, rather than creating an authority record ourselves. If we concentrate on explaining what records we hold, we should also decrease the number of rogue enquiries and increase use of our actual holdings.

The two most useful starting points are those bodies for which records have been catalogued, or which are the subject of the most frequent enquiries. Transferring, and where appropriate merging, existing administrative or biographical histories from the catalogue is also useful. Candidates to consider include founders, key predecessor companies, important overseas or subsidiary bodies, the main staff associations, and prominent people.

Implementation

As with ISAD(G), a second edition of ISAAR(CPF) has been developed. Circulated as a draft second edition in 2003, it is to be published in time for the ICA Congress in Vienna in August 2004.¹⁷ For those archivists who are aware of the first edition and have not yet reviewed this draft second edition, the changes are favourable.

One criticism of the first edition was that the standard was unwieldy. This has been improved; the unpopular table of elements, for example, has been removed. Also, the function of each element has been clarified and there are better working examples.

The introduction 'scope and purpose' is particularly useful: it clearly sets out the purpose and benefits of using authority records. In particular it indicates the need for sharing information across repositories and cross-domain bodies, especially libraries, whilst recognising that archives 'need to support a much wider set of requirements than library authority records ... and usually will contain much more information than library authority records'.¹⁸ Also ISAAR(CPF) section 4.8 clearly identifies the four core elements required for international exchange.

With directions such as these, the new edition of ISAAR(CPF) is much more user friendly. If it feels weightier (coming in at 75 pages against a previous 28 pages), it is due to the extensive examples attached.

Also, as indicated in ISAAR(CPF),¹⁹ additional standards should be used to ensure its successful implementation. In addition to the use of ISAD(G), various ISOs are suggested, relating to indexing and bibliographic information.

The need for suitable communication formats is also highlighted – in other words, having supporting technical standards. The communication standard that ensured the success of the collaborative cataloguing project Access to Archives (A2A) in the UK was EAD, which

agreed export and import routines to transfer data between different databases. Likewise the success of ISAAR(CPF) as a standard for inter-operability will require the use of a format such as Encoded Archival Context (EAC).²⁰

No disturbing changes have been made to the second edition of ISAAR(CPF); for example, no key elements have been deleted. Rather, the elements are set out in a better order; the most notable difference is that some elements from the beginning have been moved towards the end. As these were administrative elements of interest to the archivist but of little use to the researcher, this positioning is more appropriate. The standard also includes a table mapping the old to new ISAAR(CPF) elements.²¹

Highlights in the areas of description

This should be read in conjunction with ISAAR(CPF) – go on, you know you want to! Highlighted below are some pointers for using the standard for corporate authority records.

5.1 Identity area

This is where key ‘identity’ elements are given.

- 5.1.3 ‘Parallel Forms’ allows for terms for authorised entries in more than one language. With more multi-nationals emerging, legitimate corporate names in more than one language are becoming more common, whilst many ‘empire companies’ raise similar issues.
- 5.1.4 ‘Other Rules’ enables offices to choose one rule for their authorised name, but to use another to enable collaboration with other offices so, for example, both AARC2 and NCA formats can be provided.
- 5.1.5 previously ‘Non-preferred Terms’, this now includes corporate bodies’ changes of name over time.
- 5.1.6 is for any unique (alpha) numeric identifier, such as a Companies House registration number, giving corporate numbers useful prominence.

5.2 Description area

This is what would usually be set out in the ‘administrative history’ section of a catalogue, identifying the history, roles, context and activities of key importance for an understanding of the corporate body, person or family. As such it is the most substantial part of the record.

- 5.2.2 ‘History’ is where the majority of the ‘administrative history’ or ‘biographical history’ would transfer. It requires a concise narrative history, supplying dates wherever possible, and quoting the main source(s) used to compile the narrative. Although narrative text is preferred, some archive offices use a semi-tabulated format, with key dates given on a new line to the left. This can make scrolling lengthy textual descriptions online more user-friendly.²²
- 5.2.3 ‘Geographical Areas’, which for businesses would include key addresses, such as head office, works and factories addresses, and the main areas served.
- 5.2.4 ‘Legal Status’ is specifically intended for corporate bodies. ISAAR(CPF) makes some useful suggestions – Was it a business? An incorporated company? A public or private company? A partnership?
- 5.2.5 ‘Activity’. Beware! - in practice this may overlap with or even duplicate text in 5.2.2. This should be used to highlight specific functions or mandated responsibilities, particularly when known to be explicit. It can also be used for giving quick access to changes of functions at particular times. For organisations that rapidly merged and de-merged companies and functions this can be a very useful element.
- 5.2.6 ‘Mandate’. There are numerous instances where this will benefit business archives. Perhaps more than any other, this is one area that is ‘obvious’ to the insider and unfathomable to the user. Ascertaining how the organisation actually came into being – by what mechanism - can be difficult. Which businesses were created by a charter or by an Act of Parliament rather than company registration? When was the partnership officially drawn up and by whom? What meeting or directive established a key committee? Which organisations were initiated by governments but administered by companies (several war-time ‘efforts’ were administered in this way)? Having the answer easily to hand will benefit researchers.
- 5.2.7 ‘Internal Structure’ now includes ‘describe the internal administrative structure(s) of a corporate body’ as well as the previous family tree. This can be a textual description, but potentially could be illustrated by an organogram.
- 5.2.8 ‘General Context’. Again, beware repetition between entries! Much of the context in a single business archive will be the same, for example, the second world war, the general strike, the industrial revolution.

5.3 Relationships area

This has been expanded substantially, in particular the categorisation of relationships as Hierarchical, Temporal, Family or Associative. This covers all permutations of relationships, even the most complex merger, de-merger or partnership.²³

5.4 Control area

Sensibly, ICA has moved this from the beginning to the end of the authority record. They have added 5.4.4 'Status' (very useful for indicating draft or complete entries) and 5.4.5 'Level of Detail' (to indicate partial, minimal or complete entries). These are both very useful if the record is to be viewed by remote users and for archivists who do not have time to write complete authority records for each entry they create.

Personal observations

These could be considered a little obsessive!

- 5.2.2 History and 5.2.5 Functions, Occupations & Activities, could in practice duplicate each other and confuse archivists.
- CALM has included the following non-standard fields because of user-demand: 'Gender' and 'Published Works' (both would be merged into 5.2.2 History in data exchange).
- Also, I have found that for corporate entries an 'indication of size' has also been extremely useful, whether incorporated as part of Functions, Occupations & Activities or as a separate element.

Online examples of authority indices and records

A national resource

The NA:HMC's National Register of Archives (NRA) has created a wonderful online resource of authority indices, converted from their hard copy indices, linking individuals and companies to surviving records scattered throughout the UK.²⁴ This now includes their comprehensive work on UK family and estate papers, focusing on family names.²⁵

The success of this project has led the HMC to establish the infrastructure in the online register to link from the indexed names to the appropriate authority record, as well as to the surviving records. Recent searchers of the NRA may have noticed a slightly new structure for the name index entries and the occasional appearance of a new link - 'biographical information', 'administrative history' or 'family information' - that will take the user to the

authority record. This is to enable HMC-led projects to add authoritative information where appropriate.

Person authority records – art and science

The Association of Art Historians (with input from the V&A and the HMC) is compiling an online Artists' Papers Register of the papers of artists, designers and craftsmen held in the UK.²⁶ A similar UK source is 'Navigational Aids for the History of Science Technology & the Environment' (NAHSTE)²⁷ whilst 'Bright Sparcs' is the Australian equivalent.²⁸ Meanwhile, the Royal Society Archive holds members' details in their '*Sackler Database*'.²⁹

All these include biographical details - sometimes extensive.³⁰ The Artists' Register and NAHSTE also give corporate authority index entries, which are useful in pinpointing surviving records, but which do not give administrative history details. Differences of approach can also be seen between the projects; Bright Sparcs, for example, include living scientists whereas the Royal Society only provide details of deceased members on the web.

All are ISAAR(CPF) compatible, and the Artists' Register is already using the second draft edition of ISAAR(CPF). A look at '*Wedgwood, Josiah (1769-1843)*' brings up a full person authority record, including a very good example of relationship links. Although gender is not a separate element in ISAAR(CPF),³¹ the Royal Society has chosen to include it as such so that female members can be easily identified.

The information can also be used in different contexts. A search in Bright Sparcs for '*Doherty, Peter Charles (1940 -)*' shows a person authority record, information that also forms the basis of his entry in the '*Bright Sparcs - Australian Nobel Laureates*' web pages.

Although many of the entries are very brief (in parts little more than an index), the strength of these resources is that they are central authoritative sources that are gaining recognition and respect by researchers. It is also noteworthy that they all come from the 'specialist' archive sector.

Little and big

There are several examples of smaller authority databases from Australia. The Australian Women's Archives Register (AWAR)³² links to both archival and published sources, whilst the local history based 'Wellington Project Directory People and Institutions',³³ focuses on the specialist area of Church missionary history. AWAR also notes where no surviving records are known and actively requests further information.

At the other end of the scale, Linking and Exploring Authority Files (LEAF)³⁴ is a European project to harvest authority data from various formats (MARC or ISAAR(CPF) compliant) to a central system. This will create a centralised access point for archives across Europe - a European authority file. Currently 'work in progress', it is only accessible to partners. However, the authority indices will allow browsing, with brief authority records attached, which can then be exported in different formats (such as EAC), and partners can even edit online!

ULAN, the Getty Union List of Artist's Names On Line,³⁵ is another major project and includes some references to British artists and corporate bodies. It is another good example of 'relationships' being used to link authority records.

Authority indices (but no full records)

Other institutions have provided authority indices, but as yet have not been able to provide records; this is usually due to resources and work being 'in progress' rather than intent. This is the case for the National Archives,³⁶ AIM25,³⁷ the Archives Network Wales (ANW),³⁸ The Archives Hub³⁹ and The Gateway to Archives of Scottish Higher Education (GASHE).⁴⁰

AIM25, a project to provide electronic access to collection level descriptions of the archives of over fifty higher education institutions and learned societies within the greater London area, demonstrates some of the problems. Person and corporate names, for example, are indexed in their online database, with non-preferred terms clearly cross-referenced - for instance, '*Carpenters' Company* x Worshipful Company of Carpenters' links to a catalogue and an administrative history.

However, not all the indexed terms lead to an administrative history. The '*Amalgamated Society of Tailors*' entry simply leads to a catalogue reference where they are mentioned in the records of another body. When the index term relates to only one catalogue record this is fine, but if a researcher is actively looking for an administrative history this becomes impossible where there are a high number of 'returns'.

User un-friendly navigation

Web design plays a key part in navigation - it is not enough simply to provide indices. A2A⁴¹ provides a range of indices: subject, corporate name, family name, personal name and place. However, in order to find the index entry to '*Timothy Whites and Taylors Ltd, Dorchester, chemists*', for example, searches for Whit* or Tayl* do not work. The user has to search for Timo*.

Having found the index entry, to find *Timothy Whites and Taylors Ltd's* administrative history the user must follow the link to '*Dorset Record Office: Durden, Spicer and Evans of Dorchester, Chemists 1863-1968*'. Deep within the *Durden's* catalogue there is a catalogue entry for '*Timothy Whites and Taylors Ltd*', complete with administrative history. However, this relies on the user having a certain level of existing knowledge. One initial link to an authority record is obviously more user friendly!

But remember life without indices

Consider JANUS,⁴² a wonderful online resource of catalogues, but as yet without authority indices. Navigation is not always instinctive, users must be persistent or already know what they are looking for. For example, a search for Charles Darwin leads to a massive 1593 entries, some for records created by him but mostly noting material referring to him. JANUS has no biographical history for Darwin, yet within NAHSTE there is an extensive authority entry for '*Darwin / Charles Robert / 1809-1882 / naturalist*' waiting to be shared! Obviously the biography would enable the researcher to identify the records which should be consulted first.

JANUS is not the only online resource without indices; there are others such as the Online Archive of California that has a similar 'clunky' feel after navigating with authority indices.⁴³

Corporate histories

Few corporate authority records exist online to date. The Royal Bank of Scotland's (RBS) 'memory bank' has an online catalogue⁴⁴ that includes a corporate name index (for over 200 entries) that links to collection level descriptions. These include administrative history details, such as that for the '*Western Bank of Scotland 1832-57*'. Although not available as authority records, the user-friendly site highlights current best practice. It also re-uses some of the historical information in more public-friendly illustrated company histories, including a selection of the 'present constituent companies'.

Not yet available online

At a local level, archivists are being ingenious about the use of authority records. RBS also has 'authority entries' for bank branches. These indicate who the branch manager was and the administrative history of the branch, as well as architectural and key local history information. This enables them to answer common enquiries effectively as well as build up a resource for future users.

Similarly, Unilever have a ‘brands database’ that tells internal users all they need to know about the history of a brand and the key archive collections associated with it. Currently a separate database rather than part of the catalogue, this structured information can always be merged with their catalogue in the future to provide an authorised index search facility.

Specialist archives are also experimenting at a local level. The performing arts have moved from biographical entries to structuring performance and production entries, to aid navigation of their most frequent enquiries. A similar approach has been used by museums; having moved from subject to object thesauri, many are now creating local authority records for events, periods, movements etc. London’s Transport Museum has been pursuing the creation of databases that give specialised historical information on a number of topics, including ‘stations’ and ‘bus routes’.

Professional research and papers on ISAAR(CPF)

Although not extensive, there is a growing body of literature on this topic. Some, such as the 1998 NCA report ‘*National name authority file: report to the National Council on Archives*’,⁴⁵ looks at possible models for a national infrastructure for authority records.

There have been several international conferences, often with summaries (or full copies) of papers presented.⁴⁶ These refer to authority controls – including subject thesauri – giving context to the development of ISAAR(CPF). Most of the papers are available in English with working examples and useful comments. Interestingly, many of the contributors come from the library sector with a growing amount of cross-domain collaboration evident.

There is also a useful online article: ‘*The future: EAD, archival authority information and ISAAR (CPF)*’ by Lesley Richmond, University of Glasgow.⁴⁷

UK medium term weather forecast

There are several projects that may result in authority records being made available in the near future. Sources such as the ‘New Dictionary of National Biography’⁴⁸ create detailed authority records for people. Whilst cataloguing projects with enthusiastic user support – such as the British Waterways Virtual Catalogue⁴⁹ or Tracking Railway Archives Project (TRAP) - may well spark the creation of authority records.

The way forward?

So, even at current levels of input, there are major contributions being made to the authority record network with a significant number of prominent individuals, corporate and family

authority records available online. As Lesley Richmond says: 'There are many, many possible contributors to this network with data already to hand.'⁵⁰

One issue is that on the world wide web there is competition. Everything from 'weird histories and facts' about products,⁵¹ historic web-sites run by enthusiasts, to contributions made by museum curators and librarians. However all these contributions are to some degree removed from those closest to them: the custodians of their surviving records. Those furthest could not be described as 'authoritative'! But how is the researcher on the web to distinguish between reliable sources and the nutters?

This leads to a second issue: without the key link from authority record to the surviving primary source material a vital navigation aid is lost. The mechanism for providing links between the authority record and the records is already available and working at the NA:HMC, but whether this has the capability and resources to support a national network remains to be seen. Also, the work of editing and negotiating editorial proposals to prominent shared authority records - such as Charles Darwin - would need to be managed carefully.

ISAAR(CPF) and associated standards are actively in use, but have not yet achieved the critical mass that ISAD(G) has achieved. In the coming years archivists need to maintain momentum in this electronic revolution and ensure standards for 'supporting information' – such as ISAAR(CPF), subject thesauri and place indices - are put into practice.

Many archivists are weary of the work that successful computerisation requires, but we should be proud of what we have achieved. In the UK especially, the success of archive collaboration – as seen through Heritage Lottery funded projects, the existence of the NRA and our adaptability to 'project culture' - give us skills that other parts of the world and the heritage sector have yet to learn.

Also, as the examples above illustrate, it is archive offices with specialist skills that are leading the way in providing authority records. The business archive community should take heart in this and look to the future with conviction.

Ten top tips

- One creator, one name, one authority record. One authority record shared by many archivists and many catalogues!
- Check to see if there is an available source (published or online at a perpetual url) to which you can refer readers, to save recreating the wheel. Start by checking the HMC, then the main UK gateways such as AIM25.

- Concentrate on *creating* entries for the people and corporations who were the *creators* of your archives.
- Create entries as part of the cataloguing process, sooner rather than later – it saves work in the long term.
- Remember the authority record ‘replaces’ the administrative history field – you do not need to repeat the information.
- Brief authority entries can be as useful as lengthy ones. The little you know is more than most users, so share your knowledge.
- Remember the Data Protection Act. But also remember that much of the information included in an authority record is already published in some format (staff magazine, newspaper reports) and deemed to be in the public domain.
- Talk more to archivists and share related information. We don’t need to wait for perfect online authority records to begin the process.
- Teach yourself all about relationships! ISAAR(CPF) provides a useful tool for all those relationships we love to hate (mergers, controlling interests, cartels etc).
- ‘Just Good Fonds’. Links do not need to be made at all levels, usually a link from the authority entry to the fonds level will suffice.

Notes

Please note that all website addresses were correct at January 2004.

¹ At the Wellcome Library at the time of writing, currently Head of Special Collections, The Women’s Library.

² Now available as *Manual of archival description, third edition (MAD3)* by Margaret Proctor and Michael Cook (Gower, 2000)

³ For example, c.1990 Guildhall Library Manuscripts Section began entering archive descriptions using a ‘tweaked’ version of MARC.

⁴ The descriptive standards can be freely downloaded from the ICA website: <http://www.ica.org>

⁵ EAD documentation can be viewed and freely downloaded from the Library of Congress website: <http://www.loc.gov/ead/>

⁶ Dublin Core documentation can be viewed and freely downloaded from <http://dublincore.org>

⁷ *Archives on-line: the establishment of a U.K. archival network* (1998) and *British archives: the way forward* (1999). NCA reports and documentation can be viewed and freely downloaded from their website: <http://nca.archives.org.uk>

⁸ ICA Exposure Draft ISAAR(CPF) 2003, Glossary.

⁹ First published in 1977, second edition in 1995, it is available online at: <http://www.ulcc.ac.uk/unesco/>. This was used as the basis for a UK development, *The UK Archival Thesaurus (UKAT)*, available online at <http://www.ukat.org.uk/>

¹⁰ http://www.getty.edu/research/conducting_research/vocabularies/aat/

¹¹ Available at <http://www.hmc.gov.uk/nca/rules3.htm>

¹² See NCA compliant authority indices for corporate bodies, people and families in action at www.hmc.gov.uk/nra.

¹³ The number refers to the second edition that came out in 2002. It is published in the UK through the Chartered Institute of Library & Information Professionals (CILIP).

¹⁴ Currently the Manuscripts and archives catalogues do not have their searchable indices online, the library index can be seen at <http://catalogue.wellcome.ac.uk/search/a>

¹⁵ The Library has recently introduced ‘OneSearch’ which enables searching across the collections’ databases (including both the Library and the Manuscripts & Archives catalogues) as well as internet gateways and the

online catalogues of other libraries. Currently this only supports simple text searches, however it is likely that in the future authority indices will be used across the collections to ease searching. See OneSearch via the links at <http://library.wellcome.ac.uk>

¹⁶ At an early SoA ISAD(G) training session for working archivists (as opposed to students), one of the most common omissions from existing catalogues was 'extent'. In paper catalogues with no field name to act as a prompt, this type of omission of 'obvious' information commonly occurred.

¹⁷ Available at [http://www.hmc.gov.uk/icacds/eng/ISAAR\(CPF\)2.pdf](http://www.hmc.gov.uk/icacds/eng/ISAAR(CPF)2.pdf)

¹⁸ ISAAR(CPF) 1.7 and 1.8

¹⁹ ISAAR(CPF) 4.10, 4.12 and 4.13

²⁰ EAC was released as a beta working draft in 2003, see <http://jefferson.village.virginia.edu/eac/> for an online copy of the draft document, which includes working examples. Also of use is the section entitled 'Crosswalk', which maps ISAAR(cpf) to EAC. Additional details re EAC can be found at <http://www.library.yale.edu/eac/>

²¹ ISAAR(CPF) 4.7

²² See 'Bright Sparcs' entry for 'Ducker, Sophie Charlotte (1909 -)' at

<http://www.asap.unimelb.edu.au/bsparcs/bsparcshome.htm>

²³ Although a little daunting at first, see the Artists' Register (www.hmc.gov.uk/artists/) for a good online example.

²⁴ www.hmc.gov.uk/nra

²⁵ *Principal family and estate collections: family names A-K*. (1996) and *Principal family and estate collections: family names L-W*. (1999)

²⁶ For details about the project, due to be completed by autumn 2004, see

http://www.aah.org.uk/resource/apr_main.html. For the online database see <http://www.hmc.gov.uk/artists/>

²⁷ <http://www.nahste.ac.uk/project/>

²⁸ <http://www.asap.unimelb.edu.au/bsparcs/bsparcshome.htm>

²⁹ <http://www.royalsoc.ac.uk/DServeA/>

³⁰ This is a good example: 'Fell | Dame | Honor Bridget | 1900-1986 | biologist and Director of Strangeways' see http://www.nahste.ac.uk/isaar/GB_0237_NAHSTE_P1862.html

³¹ This was omitted from the first edition of ISAAR(CPF) and is incorporated into 5.2.2 'History' in the proposed draft.

³² <http://www.womenaustralia.info/browse.htm>

³³ 'People and institutions, involved in the Church Missionary Society Mission to Wellington Valley, New South Wales 1830 – 42', <http://www.newcastle.edu.au/group/amrhd/wvp/entities/>

³⁴ <http://www.crxnet.com/leaf/> The web-site also has presentations related to the project available as downloads.

³⁵ http://www.getty.edu/research/conducting_research/vocabularies/ulan/?find=morris&role=&nation=&prev_page=1&english=Y

³⁶ <http://catalogue.pro.gov.uk/> A search on the PROCAT 'Index' will lead to corporate and person authority index with brief authority details provided.

³⁷ <http://www.aim25.ac.uk/index.stm>

³⁸ <http://www.archivesnetworkwales.info/>

³⁹ <http://www.archiveshub.ac.uk/>

⁴⁰ GASHE provides electronic access to descriptions of the archives produced by ten higher education institutions and their predecessors in Scotland, see <http://www.gashe.archives.gla.ac.uk/>

⁴¹ <http://www.a2a.pro.gov.uk/search/focused.asp>

⁴² JANUS contains descriptions of a growing proportion of the archive and manuscript collections held throughout the University of Cambridge, see <http://janus.lib.cam.ac.uk/>

⁴³ <http://dynaweb.oac.cdlib.org/dynaweb/ead>

⁴⁴ http://www.rbs.co.uk/Group_Information/Memory_Bank

⁴⁵ Available at <http://nca.archives.org.uk>

⁴⁶ The following are a few of the main resources available:

- <http://www.kb.se/Bus/kursokonferens/NamniNorden/summaries.htm>, 'What's in a name? A Nordic perspective on authority work - The present and the future' Conference, 28 March 2002
- <http://www.unifi.it/biblioteche/ac/en/program.html>, *International conference on authority control, Florence, February 10-12, 2003*
- <http://www.kb.se/Bus/kursokonferens/NamniNorden/VUDMGQKB.ppt>, 'A virtual international authority file. Presentation by Barbara Tillett, Library of Congress to the Giornata di studio sul controllo di autorità nel Servizio Bibliotecario Nazionale'
- http://www.unifi.it/biblioteche/ac/2003_Authority_control_international_conference_Florence

⁴⁷ <http://www.archives.gla.ac.uk/projects/ead/papers/eadauth.html>

⁴⁸ <http://www.oup.com/oxforddnb/info/about/online/> - this resource is currently available as a CD-ROM, an online database will soon be available and will provide relevant links to the National Register of Archives.

⁴⁹ The prototype can be seen at <http://www.thewaterwaystrust.co.uk/archives/virtualarchive/default.htm>

⁵⁰ <http://www.archives.gla.ac.uk/projects/ead/papers/eadauth.html>

⁵¹ <http://www.wackyuses.com/weird.html>