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## **The Flimsy Fabric of Authorship**

**Abstract:** This paper is about authorship, its influence on bibliography and how that influence is reflected in cataloging across cultures. Beginning with Foucault's question "what is an author", it proceeds to demonstrate, through an examination of cataloging standards, that it is the role that is represented rather than true intellectual responsibility.

**Résumé :** Cette communication porte sur la paternité d'un œuvre, son influence sur la bibliographie et comment cette influence se reflète dans le catalogage, sous l'influence de la culture locale. Débutant par la question de Foucault : « Qu'est-ce qu'un auteur? », la communication tente de démontrer, par un examen des normes de catalogage, qu'il s'agit du rôle tel qu'il est représenté plutôt qu'une réelle responsabilité intellectuelle.

Our conception of authorship influences bibliography and how it is reflected in standards for library cataloging across cultures. Throughout the history of literate society cataloging rules have dictated how works may be entered and therefore retrieved. Foucault (1984) asks "what is an author" and we demonstrate that it is the role that is represented rather than some true intellectual responsibility.

The concept of authorship has significant implications for how we define "work". A cultural comparison between Callimachus's Alexandrian catalog and ancient Chinese classification, and between a current cataloging code and intervening standards aids understanding how definition of the concept of authorship relates to the concept of the work.

### **1. Cross-Cultural Perspectives**

In the western tradition, from Callimachus' (305-240 BCE) *Pínakes*, a catalog of the Ptolemaic library at Alexandria, five fragments remain plus numerous references to it (Witty 1958, 132). While *Pínakes* are classes that together constitute a classified catalog, almost every *pínax* is a class of people: the *pínax* of orators, the *pínax* of lyric poets, etc. and is internally organized by author. The English title is *Tables of Those Who Were Outstanding in Every Phase of Culture and Their Writings—in 120 Books* (Witty 1958, 133). Callimachus includes both bibliographic and biographical information about each author including names, birthplace, father, teachers, notes, and works (Parsons 1952, 211).

Author names are not used to organize traditional Chinese bibliography, but Callimachus' view of authorship and biography is surprisingly similar. The traditional Chinese concept of authorship suggests something beyond the traditional concept in the West. To the Chinese, an author's life and scholarly pedigree establishes intellectual authority. The bibliographer plays a role in shaping that authority. While Confucius needs no added information, oftentimes personal information is required to place an author in a particular time or school of thought. The intellectual lineage is so important that it is used in a classified approach to organizing entries (Lee and Lan forthcoming). The bibliographer is convinced of and conveys the message that the authority and meaning of a text come

from its author(s) just as the bibliographer establishes a structure and rhetoric to influence reading of individual texts (Tarsala 2001).

## **2. Western Bibliographic Culture**

The modern catalog is a feat of bibliographic engineering documented from Thomas Hyde's 17<sup>th</sup> century Bodleian Library catalog to 21<sup>st</sup> century WorldCat. Conceived broadly as an inventory of documents, but engineered as a collocating device for works, the catalog is part of a larger bibliographic apparatus, including bibliographies, indexes, databases, and even the notes of scholars. In every aspect of this bibliographic apparatus, the concept of authorship plays a primary role. Svenonius (2000, 43) points out authorship as a primary attribute for works in western culture. Svenonius demonstrates a shift from 19<sup>th</sup> century American authorship "causing" or "writing" (2000, 43) to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century inclusion of editing, compiling, translating, illustrating, etc.

This shift has two angles: the world of authorship and publishing, and its reflection in bibliography and cataloging. For Gaskell (1972, 183), only in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century do commercial interests embrace the concept of authorship as profitable and authors begin to find it possible to earn a living. Production methods arise that allow increased inexpensive exemplars. These factors contribute to increasing the production of "literary units" needing collocation in the bibliographic apparatus (Verona 1959). The focus on the literary unit from Pettee's 1936 declaration continues into today's catalog, where the collocation of works drives reconceptualization in FRBR.

### **2.1 Anglo-American Cataloging Codes**

As the western tradition shifting away from biography moved toward technicality, the author became important not as a person, but as a responsible party and an authoritative heading. Anthony Panizzi's 91 cataloging rules for the British Museum (1841), mandate alphabetical arrangement of the catalog by author (rule II). His focus then becomes which name (if there is more than one) and especially which form of the name.

Charles Cutter in his *Rules for a Dictionary Catalog* (1876) continues the focus on entry and form of name. The author has first place in his objects of the catalog: "... to find a book of which: (A) the author ... is known. ... To show what a library has (D) by a given author ..." (1904, 12). His first rule (§1) is to enter a work under the author whether personal or corporate, including anonymous works if the author is known. For personal authorship, he guides the decision of which person is the author if there is more than one, especially for music, commentaries, etc.; and then which form of the name. Cutter's definition varies from the author as a main entry (§1), the author as "the person who writes a book", and the author as someone having some responsibility for the work and having a personal or corporate name (1904, 14).

Anglo-American cataloging codes from the 1908 ALA Code through AACR2 demonstrate a consistent approach to entry that will represent the work by a concatenation of author and title. This approach was championed by Lubetzky, with reference to Cutter (Lubetzky 1953, 42; Cutter 1876). However, close reading of the rules reveals an almost obsessive attitude toward the imposition of an author's name. Table 1 shows examples of this language taken from the definitions of "author" found in the codes:

Cataloging Code	An author is ...
ALA/LA 1908	broader sense--maker of the book
Vatican 1948	one who has written a work; or has prepared a publication; or caused it to be prepared
ALA 1949	the person or body chiefly responsible for the intellectual content of the book; When divided ... collector or editor may be considered the author; When undeterminable ... substitute for an author's name (as a pseudonym); Governments, societies, institutions and other organizations are to be regarded as the authors
AACR 1967	the person or corporate body chiefly responsible for the creation of the intellectual or artistic content of a work
AACR2 1978	The person chiefly responsible for the creation of the intellectual or artistic content of a work.; For example [writers ... performers] are authors

Table 1: Definitions of “author”

One notices the determinism of the language of these definitions. For instance, the Vatican Code sets up a sequence of alternatives by which an entity may be considered to have been an author. The 1949 ALA code utilizes the same alternatives, but gives instructions to “consider” an editor or compiler to be an author, to “substitute” a pseudonym for the author’s name, and to “regard” corporate bodies as authors. The language was consistent through the 1967 edition of the *Anglo-American Cataloging Rules*, but for the 1978 *Anglo-American Cataloging Rules Second Edition* the definition was constrained by reference to “personal author,” with the elimination of corporate bodies as kinds of authors (although they remain potential main entries).

## 2.2 Resource Description and Access (RDA)

From AACR2 to RDA, the most noticeable change regarding authorship is the terminological shift. Neither “authorship” nor “author” is used in anywhere in RDA chapter 6 “Identifying Works and Expressions.” RDA adopts a new term “creator” to represent “a person, family, or corporate body responsible for the creation of a work” (19.2.1.1)—a definition broader than that of “author” in AACR2 (the latter only applicable to persons). “Author” becomes a creator whose work is “primarily textual in content” in RDA (Appendix I).

Another change is to the so-called “Rule of Three.” Previous codes typically enter a work of diffuse authorship (i.e., by more than three authors) under its normalized title. In RDA, an alternative rule (6.27.1.3, 144-5) now provides that all the access points representing creators may be included as the first part of the preferred access point representing the work, preceding the normalized work title.

The application of FRBR reshapes authorship in RDA. Under this entity-relationship framework an author is not considered an attribute of the work in question; it denotes a relationship between that author and the work. AACR2 Chapter 21 focuses on choosing the main entry heading—identifying authorship. RDA, on the other hand, appears to

reduce the importance of authorship. Its chapter 6 presents numerous rules for recording work and expression attributes prior to the rules for identifying authorship, with the former in much more detail than in AACR2.

These changes in RDA signal a transformation of the concept of authorship. The Anglo-American obsession with the identification of authorship receives yet another reinforcement through the new provision of having multiple authors (creators) as the lead component of the preferred access point for a work; while the new terminology and the structural relegation of authorship indicate an opposite direction. Another interpretation is that the FRBR framework, by making authors entities rather than attributes raises the profile of authority records for authors which encompass the attributes of authors.

### 3. Conclusion

Thus, it is possible that we are returning to our roots in the author as a person with attributes of their own relationships to works at the same time that we are removing the name “author” from our official parlance. The next step in our research is to determine the ramifications of this latest shift.

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