In order to establish unique personal name headings, catalogers occasionally undertake their own research to find information such as birth years or pseudonyms that might clarify an author’s relationship to his or her works. While much documentation and literature has been given to name headings, little has been said about the research that goes into forming the headings. This study asks: what do name authority research scenarios have in common? The critical incident technique was employed to gather ten specific research stories from ten catalogers. The study identified categories of research problems, sources, and solutions and observed the patterns emerging between them. The categories and their relationships may help in laying the groundwork for a common knowledge of name research among catalogers, making it easier to assign one name to one bibliographic identity.

Headings:

- Names, Personal (Cataloging)
- Authority files (Information retrieval)
- Research
CATALOGER RESEARCH FOR NAME AUTHORITY CONTROL

by
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INTRODUCTION

Name Authority Control

It has long been a hallmark of Western libraries to organize resources according to their author. Library historian Ruth Strout wrote, “there is no doubt that our whole concept of author entry first came with the Greeks” (1956, p. 257). With personal names being so important to the catalog, it is no wonder that the form of name and the information connected to it is given so much attention. If the books attributed to one Robert Brown are also attributed to another Robert Brown, how is the user to find the right book? The name in this case must be amended in order to distinguish it from like names and to bring the correct resources under its umbrella. This action, turning a personal name into an authorized heading, is called authority control of personal names.

Those catalogers who establish personal name headings work in the libraries and institutions that make up the Name Authority Cooperative (NACO), an organization that provides guidelines for catalogers establishing personal, corporate, or geographic names. As NACO-trained catalogers arrive at names in the course of their cataloging that have not yet been properly established, they create or edit name authority records (NARs) that document the chosen heading, cross-references to other names, and the sources used in establishing that name.

The information in a NAR is used by catalogers in determining access points, as well as by reference librarians and users in determining how an author relates to his or
her works. Charles Dodgson became well aware of how libraries organized names when the Bodleian Library linked his given name to his pen name, Lewis Carroll: “Desperate to keep his pseudonym private, he implored the Bodleian Library at Oxford to delete all cross-references between his names” (Ciuraru, 2011, p. 76). Since the late 20th century, NARs have been included in the Library of Congress name authority file (LCNAF), a catalog-within-a-catalog maintained by NACO institutions in which, ideally, each name represents a distinct identity: one NAR belongs to the author of *Euclid and his Modern Rivals*; another belongs to the author of *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*.

Confirming that a single NAR represents a single identity may be as simple as adding a birth year to the end of an author’s name or as complicated as tracking down genealogical trees to untangle a knot of pseudonyms. In these cases, authority control becomes a kind of library detective work. For instance, a cataloger observed before this study began disambiguated a professor’s name by searching a faculty directory for a middle initial, looking for a CV online, and finally pulling up a registry of local land deeds, where the signature on the deed happened to match the professor’s signature on a paper he advised—giving the cataloger a birth year she could use to finally disambiguate the name. Cases such as these are rare, but names that prove difficult to establish will inevitably reach a cataloger’s desk, especially as the authority file grows larger.

Unfortunately, while NACO documentation exists on how to form a new NAR, there is no formal documentation on best practices for catalogers researching personal names. If distinguishing elements are needed for a name there are few ready guides for where to look or who to talk to. This may be because there is little agreement on whether a cataloger should even be spending time on personal name research. Researching a name
with resources outside the cataloger’s database can be time-consuming and thus expensive. Leaving a name undifferentiated, that is, standing in for multiple identities, remains an option for catalogers who have not found relevant information to distinguish identities. But where to research and when to stop is unclear. For now, cataloger’s research is largely left to cataloger’s judgment, and the detective stories remain unheard.

A study was needed in order to bring sound research methods out of the darkness. Revealed methods and sources could be of use to new NACO catalogers, providing insight into how their predecessors thought through problems they will themselves face. Studies addressing this topic could provide the building blocks in forming a common grammar of personal name research. Once a shared knowledge of methods and sources has been developed, catalogers may become more adept at identifying problems and thinking ahead to likely solutions, perhaps decreasing both the amount of time it takes to complete a record and the amount of undifferentiated name records in the authority file, records that ultimately make it difficult for the catalog to do as Charles Cutter (1904) hoped, “to show what a library has by a given author” (p. 12).

Research Questions

This study asks: what do personal name research stories have in common? In other words, is there a similar set of problems that put the research process in motion? Are similar resources used? Are similar solutions arrived at?

Other, subordinate questions arise:
• Where are the limits of the Internet in name research? Given so much data published online, is there still a point at which a cataloger must reach out to a print resource or even another person?

• And, what might catalogers’ stories have to say about how future NARs could be constructed? Is there information catalogers routinely come across that, even though it is not required by any cataloging code, might help distinguish a name? As the new set of cataloging rules, Resource Description and Access (RDA), is still being developed, a study such as this might add to debates on what new NARs should contain, based on what information catalogers have proven to be available.
LITERATURE REVIEW

The first step in answering the question “How do catalogers research names?” is a review of the literature on name authority control. Resources were chosen that hint at the steps catalogers take in the creation of NARs but also provide a context and background for name authority control itself. They cover the general theory behind name authority control, its history, the cataloging codes that dictate its form, empirical studies on its modern use, and opinion pieces. The bibliography compiled by Robert Wolverton (2006), “Becoming an Authority on Authority Control,” was especially helpful in finding those pieces that most illuminate the theory and history of authority control.

General Theory

In his overview of authority control in the electronic environment, Gorman (2004) outlined the basic categories of sources catalogers turn to in creating NARs as well as the talents the researching cataloger must have. “In cases in which there are [variant names],” he began, “there is always a reason for choosing one form over the others, and crucially, one source of information over the others” (p. 14). Gorman went far in illustrating the research process’s basic shape. He suggested catalogers have historically gone first to the authority file, then to the cataloging codes, the work being cataloged, and various reference sources, though he stopped before mentioning what types of reference sources might be consulted. “Each of these has to weighed against the others,” he wrote (p. 14).
According to Gorman, the ability to weigh one information source over another depends on an individual cataloger’s technical skill in creating NARs, good judgment in navigating local and national practice, and experience in researching names. There is room in the literature however to further define Gorman’s concepts of skill, judgment, and experience by applying them to examples of actual experience. The current research methods of catalogers could be measured against the basic shape offered by Gorman.

Barbara Tillett (2004) framed her discussion of the theory behind authority control according to how it might be used in the future. Her paper predates the new RDA rules for constructing name headings, but her comments prefigure much of what was to come. She described how the practice of adding relator terms to names was abandoned with the second edition of the Anglo-American Cataloging Rules (AACR2) and found that the loss “now inhibits our fully implementing FRBR [Functional Requirements of Bibliographic Records], where such roles are essential to clear identification” (p. 26). A full implementation of FRBR for personal names as well as other concepts is precisely what led to the development of RDA.

For Tillett, the more detail a cataloger can give in an NAR the better the user will be served. In her reading of the literature, users and librarians felt a lack of identifying information in the catalog; they wanted more dates and more scope notes (p. 26). She made the plea that not only should authority records exist, but they should contain as much information as possible. This would of course necessitate further cataloger research. “You need to tell the user about variant names,” she wrote, “we want to collocate the works…but we also want the user to understand what is going on” (p. 30).
Writing at the outset of electronic cooperation between the bibliographic file and the authority file, Robert Burger (1985) said, “The many ways in which personal names change and the ways in which they are made unique provide endless amusement, as well as frustration, for the creators of authority records” (p. 16). That amusement and frustration occurs in the “labyrinth of processing” a cataloger goes through when establishing a personal name heading (p. 21). Burger defined several sources consulted by catalogers as steps in that labyrinth: Library of Congress authority records, cataloging codes, the publication itself, and reference books (p. 21). Intriguingly, Burger applauded the use of reference books as a way to combine separate aspects of librarianship: cataloging and reference. “One of the engaging aspects of authority work is its kinship to reference work,” he wrote. “Such linkages among disciplines can help to break down the psychological and administrative barriers that separate these fields” (p. 23). He went on to identify reference librarians as one of the prime users of authority records, along with fellow catalogers, acquisitions personnel, and the public (p. 32).

**Historical research**

In her history of cataloging codes, Ruth Strout (1956) proved the debate between expense and exhaustiveness to be centuries old. Catalogers, she wrote, have long asked, “Should libraries go to the effort of seeking out the full names of authors for entry?” (p. 272). Joseph Lin (1994) answered in the affirmative. Cutter himself, he wrote, always intended for names to be differentiated to the fullest extent possible. However, with the adoption of AACR1 in 1966, catalogers were no longer asked to provide anything but available dates and phrases (p. 31). When more information was not readily available,
headings were to be left without qualification, leaving the potential for confusing, identical headings. The option to establish a name as undifferentiated carried into AACR2. For Lin, “the treatment of undifferentiated names in AACR2 deviates from…Cutter’s objects” (p. 25).

Pino Buizza (2004) also wrote that catalogers, according to their ideal mission, should include as much information as possible about an author. “Libraries,” he wrote, “are called on to investigate, beyond their own collections, the names used in original editions and variant forms and to follow the linguistic usage of other nationalities—tasks requiring additional bibliographic resources” (p. 120). It is the prospect of researching beyond one’s own collection that makes authority work seem so expensive. Buizza tracked how libraries had begun to standardize the process in the last half of the 20th century. In 1977 NACO formed to share the authority work of individual libraries across the country. By 1984 a formal structure for the new authority record had been set in place, with elements for information notes, tracings, and sources, ready to be filled in by catalogers researching outside their own collections.

*Cataloging codes and guidebooks*

AACR2 (2005) stipulated that catalogers add information to a name only if that name is identical to an existing heading, and the information added can be one of three kinds. Rules 22.17A and 22.18A allowed for the addition of a date of birth or a fuller form of the name if that information is available. If that information still fails to disambiguate the name, rule 22.19 allowed for a “suitable brief term” to be added in parentheses. But should there be no information available to supply these qualifications,
the name should remain unqualified. The rules do not define the word “available” however, nor do they suggest how much time a cataloger should spend finding that information or where that cataloger should look.

The NACO Participants Manual (2005) did outline the workflow a cataloger would go through in adding the information requested by AACR2. It recommended the existing authority file be checked first followed by a bibliographic database. If those sources fail to provide the necessary information, the manual allowed for research outside the typical databases: “Further research is also needed to resolve conflicts. This will be especially important for common names” (p. 54). But in describing how to construct values for the MARC 670 field, the field that provides citations for the heading and cross-references chosen, the Manual only indirectly listed the places a cataloger might search by giving citation rules for online reference sources and non-bibliographic sources such as a phone call to the author.

Alongside FRBR, a separate entity-relationship model was created for persons, concepts, and events called the Functional Requirements for Authority Data (FRAD). Rather than restricting itself to birth dates, fuller forms, and brief terms, FRAD included a long list of attributes to personal names, including gender, place of residence, field of activity, and profession (p. 39). These attributes are exemplified in RDA where several have been made core elements. Now, if a birth date is available, it should be added whether or not it is being used to disambiguate a personal name. Though authority control is expensive, the newest cataloging code seems to be recommending more of it, thus requiring catalogers to do more research.
Empirical Studies

The empirical study that came the closest to analyzing how catalogers research was Michael Krieger’s (1996) look into the MARC 670 field, which effectively presents the research story of the cataloger in the form of citations. By sampling all the NARs under the subject “Catholic Church,” Krieger discovered that modern names were usually formed with just one, non-reference resource. Historic names, on the other hand, cited multiple reference sources. This suggested to Krieger that authority records for modern names could be mechanized, and that smaller libraries just entering NACO should be aware of the costs of authority work for historic names in particular.

Several articles treated authority work as it relates to local, specialized collections, shedding light on how the nature of the resource being cataloged might change the methods a cataloger would use to research. In 2011 Lucas Mak followed the Michigan State University librarians as they worked to identify the authors of historic university bulletins. After encountering a few pitfalls in their workflow, the staff eventually devised a flow chart for which names should be researched, such as those bearing only initials for surnames, and what resources should be used, including university directories and dissertations.

Patricia Dragon (2009) wrote a case study on librarians forming name headings for a collection of postcards. Here, the entities in the postcard were so localized that they were probably not in the LCNAF or a national bibliographic database. The first two recommendations of the NACO Participants Manual (2005) on researching names were therefore irrelevant. The catalogers had to turn to sources emanating from the subjects of the postcards as they were unhappy leaving some postcards without authority work.
Jinfeng Xia (2006) found that name authority control was similarly difficult in digital repositories, where, “in an ideal situation, personal names are as able to identify digital objects uniquely as they are to identify people” (p. 256). Xia discovered that abbreviations, identical names, and pseudonyms made for the largest challenges to searching by author in digital repositories, where names are harder to control than in a library because there are potentially many more objects and there is no existing authority file. Xia recommended the use of composite identifiers, a name along with a date and affiliation, information that is not so different from the information RDA now requires of catalogers.

Opinion Pieces

Two opinion pieces presented themselves as valuable suggestions for future study. Russell and Spillane’s (2001) article, “Using the Web for Name Authority Work,” revealed the excitement of catalogers as the World Wide Web became a trustworthy reference source for their authority research. The article detailed the types of information needed by catalogers and included an interesting aside about one library that explicitly directed its catalogers to contact authors for name information.

Visual art is another area where catalogers depend entirely on reference sources for authority work, as the pieces being cataloged rarely contain full names. Kent Boese in 2004 wrote, “a future study of headings contained in art materials is needed” (p. 102). The research required of catalogers is expensive, Boese wrote, but the cost is reduced when catalogers already have a good knowledge of potential sources, many of which Boese listed.
Overview

Although authority work has been widely covered in library science literature, with many authors championing its value, the exact methods catalogers employ to do that work has only been hinted at in histories, cataloging codes, and empirical studies. The detective work undertaken by catalogers has been described only by its effect, the citations and headings provided in NARs. There is a gap in the literature and a need in the community to hear these detective stories, as it were, straight from the catalogers.
METHODS

Collecting the Data

In order to determine the common ways in which catalogers investigate personal names, verbal accounts of specific research scenarios were collected from catalogers using the Critical Incident Technique (CIT). Luo and Wildemuth (2009) defined CIT as an interviewing method, one that is “particularly useful for gathering data about information behaviors, particularly if they occur only occasionally” (p. 235). In semi-structured interviews, participants are asked to recall the details of one, specific incident. The incident, according to John Flanagan, who published the first major summary of CIT in 1954, “must occur in a situation where the purpose or intent of the act seems fairly clear to the observer” (p. 327). With the participant’s aim in mind, the researcher can then identify the extreme behaviors, the outstandingly effective or ineffective methods the participant used to reach his or her aim.

Flanagan used CIT in a study on the Aviation Psychology Program, and the method has since been adopted in the health and information sciences. Writing in the field of information science, Urquhart, Light, and Thomas (2003) called CIT a “qualitative retrospective interview” (p. 66): “the CIT encourages participants to tell their story” (p. 71). In information behavior, Urquhart explained that the method serves to identify the motivation of the participant, the urgency of the information search, the types of information sought, the sources used, and the reasons for selecting those sources.
Marie Radford wrote in 2006 that the method was designed to draw out the most memorable aspects of an event. She outlined Flanagan’s five stages of CIT—general aims, plans and specifications, collecting data, analyzing data, interpreting and reporting—and remarked on how each stage is represented in an information and library science study. While the technique has been used in library science to gauge success in user searching, the current study extended the method to catalogers, as they too experience successful and unsuccessful searches.

Narrative is a natural window into any research process. Research has a beginning, middle, and end, obstacles, setbacks, and payoffs. Since every research scenario is in some way a detective story, CIT was chosen as the best means of collecting those stories. The methods and sources catalogers use to identify names naturally line themselves up into the chronological order of a specific incident. Stories of surprising failure and hard-won success, precisely the kind of stories CIT is designed to draw out, highlighted the methods and sources that have generally not been discussed in the literature, either because they are too idiosyncratic or have been taken for granted.

The essential question asked of all participants was: “Can you recount a time constructing a personal name heading when your research into that author or identity was particularly lengthy or involved?” In order to gather unbiased data, the answer to this question went largely uninterrupted. Extra, clarifying questions, however, were in some cases asked at the end of the interview, such as:

- How long did it take to create or edit the record?
- What other sources did you use?
- What made this name so difficult to establish?
For the purpose of context, the semi-structured interview also considered
information about how the incident related to the cataloger’s other name authority work, such as:

- What made you devote the time to establishing this particular name?
- Is it common for you to spend that amount of time on one record?
- Have you created records using the new RDA rules? How do you feel RDA will change your research of names?
- Is there information you find while researching a name that you wish you could include in the record?

Although the purpose of each interview was to prompt the recounting of the incident, these questions were asked in order to provide multiple views on the data and more ways to answer the given research questions. Audio recordings were made, with permission, of telephone and in-person interviews and then transcribed.

Sample

Ten catalogers, one from the Library of Congress and nine from academic libraries across the United States, shared stories of personal name research for this study. Although librarians in many types of institutions do work in name disambiguation, the study limited its scope by concentrating on NACO-trained catalogers in academic or national libraries. NACO requires members to undergo extensive training in the creation of NARs, assuring that the records made available to institutions around the world are held to the same degree of quality and consistency. NACO-trained librarians regularly create new NARs, as participation in the program requires an annual minimum
contribution from NACO institutions. Trained catalogers are therefore familiar with the process of investigating names and had a higher likelihood of sharing valuable incidents.

Catalogers were invited to participate in the study through the AUTOCAT and OCLC CAT listservs. The listserv message (seen in Appendix C) identified the researcher and asked for those NACO-trained librarians willing to be interviewed on the personal successes and failures they have had in investigating names. Participants were also sought closer to the researcher’s own institution, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where NACO-trained catalogers may be found at several campus libraries and at nearby universities. The scope of this study being relatively small, both in time and in resources, only the first ten respondents were interviewed and included in the sample population.

Analyzing the Data

Each cataloger was assigned a pseudonym, and qualitative thematic analysis was performed on their reported incidents to identify the kinds of problems that incited the research, the sources consulted, and the solutions, or lack of solutions, that brought the incidents to a close. In this way the analysis resembled the methods Carol Kuhlthau (2004) used for answering a research question much like the one in this study: “do users have common experiences in the process of information seeking that can be articulated and described?” (p. 31) After Kuhlthau gathered her results, she thought of the information search “as a process with a beginning, middle, and end. The [participant’s] descriptions of the beginning of a search were grouped together, as were their
descriptions of the middle and the end of a search” (p. 37). The search scenarios in this study were likewise broken down into beginnings, middles, and ends.

In order to define what cataloger research stories have in common, categories were identified and defined for these beginnings, middles, and ends, that is to say, the problems that incited the research, the sources that were consulted on the way towards a solution, and the solutions eventually reached. The categories were then analyzed for their relationships with an eye towards emerging, causal patterns.

**Limitations**

Memory is the blessing and the curse of CIT. Incidents that are easily remembered are often the incidents that include extreme behaviors, and extreme behaviors draw the most vivid portrait of a subject’s experience, revealing the most information for analysis. On the other hand, as Urquhart (2003) explains, CIT has no guarantee of faithful recall. Flanagan (1954) warns that vague reports indicate a poor memory of the incident. Likewise, even vivid accounts may be more memorable than accurate, having been naturally exaggerated, and though they speak of outstanding successes and failures, those successes may not be representative of a cataloger’s usual authority work. CIT provides a glimpse of a past experience, but one that is shaped and colored by the memory of the subject.

Another limitation of this study is its size. With one researcher and a small number of participants, this is exploratory research, but the findings hint at productive future research.
RESULTS

In the case of this small sample population, all ten incidents (some occurring over a year prior to the interview, others only one or two weeks old), ended with the cataloger finding the information he or she needed to help create or edit a record. Some of the research scenarios extended over days as the catalogers waited for emails to be returned or switched back and forth between projects, others found completion within 30 minutes, but each of the stories ended in relative success rather than an unauthorized or undifferentiated name. All ten research stories then had clear beginnings (problems), middles (sources), and ends (solutions).

Problems

The incidents recounted represented exceedingly rare examples of personal name research in the cataloger’s usual workflow. For the majority of NAR creation the name presented in the work-in-hand is already unique, and the cataloger can simply transcribe the name and authorize the record. Rosalyn, a cataloger interviewed at UNC’s Health Sciences Library, said, “usually there’s not a conflict, usually it’s whatever’s there and you’re happy with it.” Thomas, a cataloger at the Duke University Law Library, estimated one in ten created NARs having a conflict.

When a problem does arrive catalogers have the choice to pursue it, knowing they might slow their own productivity, or simply to move on before too much time has been
wasted. Henry, a cataloger at the Library of Congress and a member of the Cooperative Programs Section, gives himself a 20-minute time limit, after which, if he cannot find any relevant information, he will establish the heading as undifferentiated. “We really don’t encourage extensive research in NACO,” he said, “because authority work is probably the most expensive aspect of cataloging and we’re just trying to streamline it as much as possible.” Other catalogers interviewed however felt compelled to work beyond 20 minutes, either because the materials in-hand were recently donated and given a large priority or, as Alex, a cataloger at the University of Akron, explained, “it was my authority gut telling me to do some extra work.”

Whatever the motivation for taking time to research a name, the need to do any research at all was found to arise from one of two broad conditions: (1) where names presented in the work-in-hand conflicted with a name already in the authority file, and (2) where names presented in the work-in-hand did not conflict with a name already in the authority file but were considered to be lacking in information either required by AACR2 or deemed relevant by the cataloger.

The NACO Participants Manual (2005) defines a conflict as, “A condition in which certain cross-references match an established name authority record (NAR) heading, jeopardizing its uniqueness within the database” (p. 7). The term is used here to mean any match between a potential heading and one already existing. According to AACR2 (2005) rules 22.17 through 22.19, the cataloger must distinguish the name in such cases by adding either a date, a fuller form of the name, or some qualifying word or phrase. Of the ten incidents recorded, only three were caused by a conflict with a preexisting heading.
If the existence of a conflict caused these three catalogers to spend time researching, it was the existence of another set of problems that invited them to spend more time than usual researching. In the ten incidents collected, six specific problems were identified as complicating what could be the simple editing or creating of a record: *common names, incomplete names, pseudonyms, renaissance authors, incorrect information, and multiple forms*. Those incidents that arose from the need to break a conflict were complicated by two of these identified problems: the *common name* (seen in one incident) and the *incomplete name* (seen in two incidents).

- **Common Name**: When Seth at Valdosta State University found the name of a translator conflicting with a name in the authority file, his search to qualify that name was complicated by just how common the name appeared. “Robert Brown’ is a pretty common name,” he said. Not only did he have to find a date, fuller name, or phrase, he had to make sure the information he found belonged to his Robert Brown and not another.

- **Incomplete Name**: When Peter at the University of Florida ran across a conflict, his search was complicated by the given surname being accompanied by only a first and middle initial. Names that would have helped him track down qualifying information were obscured, and a search that normally takes only a few minutes took two to three hours.

The other seven incidents met the second condition for research, where a conflict did not arise but the cataloger suspected some other issue would require investigation. Here, the name given in the work-in-hand could very well be entered into the authority file as it is, without any disambiguation required. In these cases however something
jumps out to the cataloger as needing attention. Something either in the work-in-hand or in the authority file causes them to suspect another problem exits, such as separate bibliographic identities, multiple forms of the same name, or even a problem not addressed by any rule in AACR2 or the NACO Participants Manual.

Those scenarios that arose from a suspected issue rather than an explicit conflict were complicated by the other identified problems: pseudonyms, renaissance authors, incorrect information, and multiple forms. Pseudonyms (seen in one incident) and renaissance authors (seen in two incidents) present similar issues in that both involve reconciling multiple identities, either splitting them apart or bringing them back together.

- **Pseudonyms**: Although the name “Henry Catalan” did not conflict with any name in the authority file, Julie at St. Mary’s University of Minnesota suspected the name was used as a pseudonym, necessitating some proof of a link between identities.

- **Renaissance authors**: Although Rosalyn could have used the preexisting record for George F. Bond, she suspected the name belonged to the author represented in another record, even though the names were assigned to works in contrasting fields: submarines and Appalachian dialects.

- In the case of **multiple forms** (seen in three incidents), the name presented in the work-in-hand was almost immediately discovered to be one of many. Given a set of archival materials, Lynn, a cataloger at the University of Wyoming, was faced with multiple variants and birth years for wife of Buffalo Bill, Louisa Cody. Extra research was then required to settle on one form and birth year.
In the case of incorrect information (seen in three incidents), the name presented in either the work-in-hand or in an existing NAR seems to be the major form, but the cataloger has reason to believe some part of the name or its qualifications is incorrect. When searching to see if the name of a Brazilian composer was already established, it dawned on Alex that the given name had an unusual spelling for a Brazilian name. He suspected it may have been misspelled and felt compelled to track down the correct spelling, thereby complicating what could have been a quickly-made record.

The research stories collected for this study occurred due to one of two conditions, either the name conflicted with an already established heading, or the name was suspected of having some related issue despite its uniqueness. Six categories of problems were identified causing a research scenario to become an extended research scenario. Common and incomplete names complicated the effort to resolve a conflict. Pseudonyms, renaissance authors, multiple forms, and incorrect information added extra research time to names without an explicit conflict.

Sources

The sequence of sources consulted, with either success or failure, formed the middle sections of the ten collected incidents. The catalogers presented 25 distinct sources across their stories, from the Virtual International Authority File (VIAF) to YouTube. For the sake of this study, a source was considered to be any resource consulted by the cataloger, including resources that acted only as gateways to further
information, like Google, and regardless of whether the resources were eventually cited in the 670 field of a NAR. The work-in-hand, despite delivering obviously important information, was not considered as a source, nor was the LCNAF, as it is the routine first stop for any cataloger ready to create or edit a NAR.

The catalogers consulted an average of four sources per incident, an average of three online sources and one print source. Although only one of the names was associated with the field of law (the field with the highest number of incidents was science), that incident involved eight sources.

The 25 distinct sources were classed into eight categories, the five most commonly used categories being online bibliographic databases, search engines, online reference sources, print reference sources, and websites representing a single entity (the table in Appendix A lists the sources consulted and their categories).

• The category of sources most often consulted was the online bibliographic database, which includes sources like OCLC Connexion and the Library of Congress catalog. It was the most commonly consulted source category as both the first and the last step in the research process.

• A search engine, in this case universally Google, was consulted five times across all incidents, twice as the first step in the process.

• Online reference sources includes sources like Grove Music Online and the Martindale Hubbell directory of law professors. Like search engines, online reference sources were consulted five times across all incidents, but rarely as a first or last source.
- *Print reference sources* were slightly less consulted than online reference sources and were also rarely consulted as the first or last source. In some cases the print reference source had no online counterpart, and in others it just happened to be a trusted, close-at-hand volume.

- The category of *websites representing a single entity* included personal, municipal, and university websites. Although they were never consulted as either the first or last source, they were the most common source to be considered pivotal in the research process. The information most relevant to the cataloger’s search was commonly found on a website, with the cataloger often going on to confirm that information in another source.

In one occasion, no single, pivotal source presented itself. In determining the correct form of name for the wife of Buffalo Bill, Lynn found herself compiling forms from various places, each source contributing to her eventual decision. “That was one of the interesting things,” she said. “There really wasn’t one good source.”

Overall, the first or last source consulted was commonly an *online bibliographic database*, with the most crucial information coming from a *website representing a single entity*. That information helped link the problems identified above to the solutions eventually reached by the cataloger.

*Solutions*

After analyzing the problems that incited each incident and the sequence of consulted sources that made up the incidents’ middle sections, the solutions were analyzed for their own commonalities. At the broadest level of commonality, all of the
incidents collected ended in either a created or an edited NAR. Six of the incidents ended with a new NAR; four ended with a revised NAR. Qualifiers and variant names were sometimes added to records regardless of whether or not the name conflicted. Eight of the ten catalogers added at least one qualifier to their records, the majority being dates. Seven of the ten catalogers added variant name references, either in 4XX or 5XX fields, adding an average of two variants.

Four categories of solutions were identified and defined: *qualifying a name to break a conflict*, *verifying a link* between names, *identifying correct information*, and weighing the *majority usage* of a form.

- **Qualifying a name to break a conflict** (seen in three incidents) is the most straightforward of solutions. In the incidents that began with an explicit conflict, a date or full name was eventually added to the record, resolving the conflict. However, one of the other three solutions had to be employed before the name was qualified in order to help unravel the inherent complications in the name.

- **Verifying a link** between names (seen in four incidents) resolves any issue of disparate identities and fields of study. It is recommended for pseudonyms in particular in rule 22.2B1 of AACR2 and on page 30 of the NACO Participants Manual (2005). After Julie suspected the name Henry Catalan was a pseudonym, she confirmed it by discovering a record in VIAF for the author’s real name that included the name Henry Catalan as a see reference, thereby verifying the link.

- **Identifying correct information** (seen in three incidents) entails some trust from the cataloger that the information they have found, while not necessarily the same information found in the work-in-hand or even the information found in a
majority of sources, is nevertheless correct. After Heather, a cataloger at Northwest University, read the beginning of a book about an older and younger sister traveling to America, she was surprised to find the NARs for each sister containing the same birth year. She eventually emailed the author and confirmed that one of the sisters had lied about her age for years, throwing off the other material published about her. With that email, Heather felt confident she had identified the correct information.

- Weighing the *majority usage* of a name’s form (seen in three incidents) contrasts with *identifying correct information* in that the decided heading need not be trusted as correct but only as representing a majority of the forms in a sample of published materials. Rule 22.1A of AACR2 (2005) and page 19 of the NACO Participants Manual (2005) dictate the form of name chosen should be the form most commonly used. When Henry at the Library of Congress was alerted to the problem of two NARs representing an author who had only one bibliographic identity, a problem of multiple forms, he began by searching both forms in OCLC Connexion. Opening up every tenth record in over a hundred returned records, he discovered that one form of the name had been used 60 percent of the time. The two NARs were then collapsed into one with the name most commonly used chosen as the authorized heading.

These four solutions were employed, sometimes in combination, in the ten incidents recorded, each being shaped by the source and problem that preceded it.
Incident: Who is Paul Daly?

All of the categories identified in this study—in problems, sources, and solutions—could be combined, arranged, and rearranged within one research scenario. In some incidents one problem eventually led to another, or one problem was misinterpreted as being an entirely different problem. An incident is described here in detail, based on the interview transcript, in order to illustrate the fluid arrangement of these categories.

Cataloging a book on law, Thomas entered the name of the author into Connexion’s authority browser as it appeared on the title page: Paul Daly. “The problem,” Thomas discovered, “was there were four or five other Paul Dalys.” He scrolled through those four or five records, but found no hint that the Paul Daly who wrote about law was any of the Paul Dalys represented in the authority file, who wrote about things like Irish history and rugby. Thomas thought the name simply conflicted with the others, and he would have to search for some qualifying feature, a search that would be complicated by Paul Daly being such a common name.

The work-in-hand stated only that Paul Daly was a law professor in Canada. Thomas began by searching Google in the hopes of finding a CV. A university website did indeed include Daly’s CV, but the CV did not include the information Thomas most wanted: a birth year. From the web, Thomas turned to the AALS directory of law professors. Finding no information there, Thomas suspected Paul Daly was too young of a professor to be included yet, the same problem he ran across in Cambridge’s publication catalog, which he searched knowing that Cambridge had published Daly’s dissertation. Thomas then looked to another directory, Martindale Hubbell, where the name Paul Daly does appear, but without any qualifying information. In last ditch
attempts, Thomas searched AMICUS, the Canadian authority file, and VIAF, but without success.

“So at this point I’ve pretty much given up,” said Thomas. Without a ready source to call up, Thomas took the email address from the university website and contacted Daly directly for a year of birth or a fuller form of his name. Daly responded quickly with a birth year, 1983, the same birth year as a Paul Daly already in the authority file. Daly also volunteered that he had written another book, on rugby, but he doubted Thomas’ library had it in its collection. Thomas soon realized that the Paul Daly born in 1983 already in the authority file was the same Paul Daly who had written about rugby, and was in turn the same Paul Daly who had written about law.

After a personal contact with the author, Thomas found that the presumed condition and problem underlying his research was false. Paul Daly did not in fact conflict with another name, and the search for qualifying information was not complicated by the name being so common, but rather by Paul Daly being a renaissance author. “It ended being that I didn’t need the authority record and all I had to do was update the previous authority record,” he said. Though he assumed he would be identifying correct information to break a conflict, Thomas ended up verifying a link between the name in the work-in-hand and the name in the authority file, not to break a conflict but to add to the information collected in the record so that future catalogers would not go searching down the same path (the final MARC NAR is included in Appendix B).
DISCUSSION

Analysis on the ten incidents recorded was able to shed light on the study’s main research question: what do name authority research stories have in common? The analysis was also able to shed at least some light on the study’s subordinate questions: “where are the limits of the Internet in name research?” and “what might catalogers’ stories have to say about how future NARs could be constructed?”

Commonalities

According to Gorman (2004), researching and constructing authority records is a process of negotiating ambiguities. Considering that there is no global cataloging code, that a local authority file may be more authoritative than a national authority file, and that information in the work-in-hand may contradict itself, the evidence needed to create a “truly authoritative” authority record will always be a mix of the objective and the subjective (p. 14). The objective evidence consists of the authority file that every cataloger begins by consulting, the cataloging code they follow in forming the heading, the work-in-hand itself, and any available reference sources. But all of this objective evidence requires subjective interpretation, with each piece of evidence weighed against another. Here, a cataloger exercises their own personal skill (“knowledge of applicable reference sources”), their judgment (“the ability to weigh all of these factors”), and their experience (“the cumulation of knowledge”) (p. 15).
The incidents collected in this study confirm Gorman’s description of catalogers relying on objective evidence and subjective interpretation. The catalogers did indeed consult the authority file, the cataloging code, the work-in-hand, and reference sources, and they did indeed rely on skill, judgment, and experience. By investigating exactly what reference sources they consulted, in what order, and according to what problems, a connection can be seen between objective evidence and subjective interpretation. In the case of these ten collected incidents, certain subjective interpretations came about as reactions to certain forms of objective evidence. By breaking down problems, sources, and solutions into categories one can see relationships forming between research choices even in this small sample population. While the categories could be arranged in most ways imaginable, certain patterns did emerge, wherein some sources and solutions tended to follow some problems.

At the very start of the research process, certain conditions, whether a name *conflicts* or *does not conflict* with an existing heading, seem to predicate certain complicating problems. Only the complications of *common* and *incomplete names* followed the first condition of a conflicting heading. And *common* and *incomplete names* never followed the second condition of a suspected issue. When Thomas assumed his name conflicted with an existing heading, he also assumed his search would be made difficult by the commonness of the name Paul Daly. In actuality, his name did not conflict, and the real complicating feature was that of a *renaissance author*. Even within one incident, the two conditions are naturally succeeded by two sets of problems.

The subjective quality of record formation can be seen especially when a cataloger begins approaching sources. After they have searched an *online bibliographic*
database, as recommended by the NACO Participants Manual (2005), the next source consulted is largely a result of domain knowledge and convenience. When Julie recognized a potential literary pseudonym, she could have begun searching OCLC Connexion like many of the other catalogers. Instead she happened to have a book of pseudonyms on hand from her library’s own collection and began searching there. A pattern does appear however between the incorrect information and multiple forms problem categories. Those catalogers who suspected they were dealing with incorrect information eventually settled on a smaller source, a website or an email from the author, whereas those who were faced with multiple forms of names found their information in larger sources, databases and archival collections. It seems that those who suspected a specific flaw went looking for a specific source, and those who did not see an issue of correctness went looking for a more general source.

A distinct division between the problems of incorrect information and multiple forms continued through to the solutions. Those who assumed they had incorrect information eventually identified what they believed to be the correct information, a belief justified by the specificity of the pivotal source. Those faced with multiple forms went on to weigh those forms for a majority usage. When Peter, trying to break a conflict by finding the full name of an author who only used initials, stumbled on a website listing the author’s various married names, his problem switched from an incomplete name to multiple forms. His solution therefore also switched to weighing the new forms for a majority usage. He would not have to verify a link between the names since the link was already verified. Nor would he have to identify the correct information, since all the forms, being married names, were in some sense correct.
The figures below present the main problems, sources, and solutions that composed each of the ten incidents. They summarize the relationships observed between the identified categories: *common* and *incomplete names* followed conflicts, smaller sources followed a suspicion of *incorrect information*, and weighing *majority usage* followed the problem of *multiple forms*. The incidents are divided between those that began with a conflict (condition 1) and those that began with a suspected problem (condition 2).

**Condition 1: Name *conflicts* with a pre-existing heading**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cataloger</th>
<th>Seth</th>
<th>William</th>
<th>Peter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Problem</td>
<td>Common name</td>
<td>Incomplete name</td>
<td>Incomplete name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pivotal Source</td>
<td>Single Website</td>
<td>Print Reference</td>
<td>Single Website</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solution</td>
<td>Verify link, Qualify to break conflict</td>
<td>Identify correct information, Qualify to break conflict</td>
<td>Majority usage, Qualify to break conflict</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Condition 2: Name *does not conflict* but a problem is suspected**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cataloger</th>
<th>Julie</th>
<th>Rosalyn</th>
<th>Thomas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Problem</td>
<td>Pseudonym</td>
<td>Renaissance author</td>
<td>Renaissance author</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pivotal Source</td>
<td>Online bibliographic database</td>
<td>Print collection</td>
<td>Personal contact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solution</td>
<td>Verify link</td>
<td>Verify link</td>
<td>Verify link</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cataloger</th>
<th>Alex</th>
<th>Heather</th>
<th>Lynn</th>
<th>Henry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Problem</td>
<td>Incorrect information</td>
<td>Incorrect information</td>
<td>Multiple forms</td>
<td>Multiple forms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pivotal Source</td>
<td>Single Website</td>
<td>Personal contact</td>
<td>Genealogical</td>
<td>Online bibliographic database</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solution</td>
<td>Identify correct information</td>
<td>Identify correct information</td>
<td>Majority usage</td>
<td>Majority usage</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Limits of the Internet

For many of the catalogers interviewed, online materials were at one point or another put down for either print materials or direct contact with another person (albeit contact through email). Print materials, which made up only a quarter of the sources consulted, were turned to when online reference sources failed to date back far enough or when relevant monographs were discovered in the cataloger’s own library. The subjective quality described by Gorman also played a part in the selecting of print sources. Catalogers often turned to print either through habit or convenience. In this respect the Internet has different limits for different catalogers.

Personal contact, which became a pivotal source just as often as print materials, was turned to only as a last resort, when, as Thomas said, “I’ve pretty much given up,” and usually after many other sources had been tried. In the case of Heather, tracking down the birth year of the sister who had lied about her age, contacting the author would have been the only way to gather correct information, as the published materials all had the wrong date. The Internet amplifies information, which makes it nearly limitless for those who want to weigh the multiple forms of a name, but presents a problem for those who suspect the information was incorrect before it was amplified.

Future Name Authority Records

Of the seven catalogers working with names that did not have an explicit conflict, five qualified the headings with birth years. The dates were added to the record despite the fact that they did nothing to disambiguate the name. For many of the catalogers
interviewed, information was recorded or revised whether or not it was needed according to AACR2.

This practice fits well with the new RDA rule: “When recording data identifying a person, family, or corporate body, include as a minimum the [core elements] that are applicable and readily ascertainable”—core elements including date and full name among many others. When Seth found a bio for his translator Robert Brown that included a middle name, he was able to verify a link between that Robert Brown and another in the Library of Congress catalog, which happened to include a birth year. Rather than pick only the date or the middle name, Seth included both in his record. “I constructed a heading thinking I guess towards RDA,” he said, “where you do put as much information as you can in the heading.”

Considering that the potential qualifications to a name have expanded from three in AACR2 to ten in RDA, and that those qualifications need only be applied somewhere in the record itself rather than in the 1XX field, Thomas believes the new code will aid in his research of names. “It’ll give me more options to be able to differentiate if that’s necessary,” he said. “I think it’ll make me be able to stop earlier in the process.” In this light, Thomas could stop searching for a birth year if he did not consider it “readily ascertainable,” and instead distinguish the record with the profession he had listen in the work-in-hand. While this would accelerate the process in some instances, it might also provide further confusion for problems like the renaissance author. If Thomas had not gone to the extent of contacting the author directly, he might not have been able to verify a link between his heading and the heading already in the authority file. He might have
created a new record, qualified it with “law professor,” and left it beside the record that cited the author for a book on rugby, thus creating a new problem.

The issue of when to stop researching however would not be resolved by any cataloging code. Those catalogers who diagnose the problem as incorrect information and move towards identifying correct information have their own limit for research based on their own subjective judgment for what is and is not an authoritative, objective source. Heather discovered the correct birth year for her heading by contacting the author directly, while Henry decided on the form of his heading by measuring popular usage. Both methods take the library user into account. Heather decided the public would benefit by seeing the correct birth year in the catalog rather than the incorrect year that had spread through the published materials. Henry decided the published materials would be a signal for which form of name the public was familiar with. No matter the cataloging code, some catalogers will push on until they have found what they consider the best form of a name, while others will opt for a form based on majority usage. Both sets of catalogers have the user in mind, though they may disagree over who has the cataloger’s time and resources in mind.
CONCLUSION

In much of the literature, authority control is touted as the most important function of the library catalog. “Cataloging cannot exist without standardized access points,” wrote Gorman (2004), “and authority control is the mechanism by which we achieve the necessary degree of standardization” (p. 12). Without authority control works by the same author could not be brought together and works by different authors who have identical names would be mistakenly brought together, making for a confusing and ultimately false web of resources.

As well as being the most important function of the catalog, authority control is also the most time consuming for catalogers and therefore the most expensive for libraries. Creating a NAR for a common name, for example, takes more effort than a simple transcription of the name as it appears in the work-in-hand. Research is occasionally required to discover those facts about an author that will separate him or her from authors with identical names. Sometimes this research will involve no more than the addition of a birth year or middle initial found on the author’s CV. But sometimes the research will expand into direct efforts to contact the author, or, if the author is no longer living, the consulting of ever more esoteric reference sources.

This study set out to discover what the personal name research stories of NACO-trained catalogers have in common. The study utilized CIT to collect narratives from catalogers on specific research scenarios. The narratives were analyzed for categories of
problems, sources, and solutions. Although more categories could be defined in future studies, hopefully the categories identified here as well as their emerging relationships play a small part in forming the initial pieces of a larger model of personal name research. A set of best practices might be developed around categories such as these so that new catalogers will not have to reinvent the wheel each time they research a personal name. A cataloger who suspects the problem of a renaissance author, for example, will know that their colleagues have found specific sources such as personal contact or volumes from their own print collection the most helpful in verifying a link between names and thus solving the problem.

A set of best practices however will ultimately depend upon some agreement in the cataloging community over when or how a name should be qualified. “NACO works under the principle of representation of usage of an author’s name,” said Henry. “We’re not really creating biographies when we create an authority record.” And yet Heather found that the representation of usage was ultimately flawed in her case and believed the time it took to correct a birth year would be well worth the chance to quell future confusion. “This is why I feel we need to do the digging that we do,” she said. Henry noted that RDA would continue AACR2’s practice of allowing names to remain undifferentiated. Other catalogers expressed discomfort with undifferentiated names and said they felt compelled to track down what they considered to be the right answer.

Given the variety of problems a cataloger might face with personal names, and the variety of skill, judgment, and experience catalogers possess, there remains no uniform answer for when to stop researching. The NACO Participants Manual (2005) asks catalogers “to research problems as fully as possible before referring them to the LC
liaison” (p. 94). RDA suggests the inclusion of core elements that are “readily ascertainable,” and AACR2 states that a name should be left undifferentiated if a date, full name, or distinguishing term is not “available.” But for different catalogers working with different problems, “possible,” “ascertainable,” and “available” come to mean different things. Rosalyn, being well versed with genealogical sources, would think nothing of looking up a name in the Social Security Death Index. To her, that source is “available.” But to a cataloger less fluent in genealogy, that objective evidence might be beyond the scope of subjective skill and experience, that is, unavailable.

Studies that identify and define common problems, sources, and solutions of name research help enlarge the definition of “available.” The individual cataloger will have at their disposal the methods and sources of their peers, widening the scope of their own skill and experience. Such shared knowledge might then result in fuller records completed in less time, records that contribute to an authority file where each heading ideally represents one bibliographic identity. With cataloger research transparent, the use of undifferentiated names might decrease, thereby helping to fulfill a goal as simply worded as it is difficult to attain: “to show what the library has by a given author” (Cutter, 1904, p. 12).
REFERENCES

American Library Association, Canadian Library Association, Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (Great Britain), and Joint Steering Committee for Revision of AACR (Eds.). (2005). *Anglo-American cataloguing rules*. Chicago; Ottawa; London: American Library Association; Canadian Library Association; Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals.


APPENDIX A

Sources recorded in critical incidents and their assigned categories:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source Category</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Number of Times Used</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Search Engine</td>
<td>Google</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Bibliographic Database</td>
<td>Library of Congress Catalog</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>OCLC Connexion</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>VIAF</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cambridge Catalog</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AMICUS</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Online Journal Database</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Reference</td>
<td>Grove Music Online</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>YouTube</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Music Sack</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BGMI</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Martindale Hubbell</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website</td>
<td>University Website</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Personal Website</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Town Website</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genealogical</td>
<td>Ancestry.com</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>FindAGrave.com</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Print Reference</td>
<td>Pseudonym Book</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Faculty Directory</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Enciclopedia de Musica Brasiliera</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AALS</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Print Collection</td>
<td>Archives</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Biography</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Autobiography</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Contact</td>
<td>Email</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX B

Final MARC NAR for Incident: Who is Paul Daly?

| 000 | 00688cz a2200157n 450 |
| 001 | 6820585 |
| 005 | 20110611074833.0 |
| 008 | 060410nl acannaabn ln aaa c |
| 010 | _la nr2006009756 |
| 035 | _la (OCoLC)oca06912396 |
| 040 | _la leDuTC lb eng lc leDuTC ld NcD-L |
| 100 | _la Daly, Paul, ld 1983- |
| 670 | _la Administrative law in Ireland, 2010: lb t.p. (Paul Daly; replacement professor of law University of Ottawa) |
| 670 | _la E-mail from author, Jun. 8, 2011 lb (Paul Daly, b. 1983; confirms author of The last great tour, 2005) |
| 670 | _la His The last great tour?: travelling with the 2005 Lions, 2005 : lb t.p. (Paul Daly) |
| 670 | _la E-mail from author, 5 Apr. 2006 lb (Paul Daly, b. 24 Sep. 1983) |
APPENDIX C

Recruitment Email

SUBJECT: Participants Sought for Research Study on Personal Name Authority

Dear NACO Cataloger,

As a candidate for the MSLS degree at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, I am currently writing my masters paper and investigating how professional, NACO-trained catalogers research personal names to form unique headings. I am interested in learning how catalogers conduct their own research, where they go and who they talk to. Perhaps there is something users can learn about how catalogers research, and vice versa.

If you have ever found yourself in a particularly lengthy search for a disambiguating date or phrase, consulting an ever-wider variety of sources to provide your patrons with a correct access point, I hope you will consider calling or emailing me and setting up a time to share your story.

Interviews may be conducted in-person or via telephone and will, with your permission, be recorded. Audio recording may be discontinued at any time and questions may be skipped without penalty. All interview transcripts will be made anonymous by the use of pseudonyms and no personally identifiable data will be retained after the study’s completion. Participation is wholly voluntary and results may be reported back to you upon request. Should you choose to participate, a consent form will be sent for your signature and electronic return. Those who wish to be interviewed in person may bring the signed consent form to the interview.

Please email with any questions or comments, and thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Jonathan Tuttle