

Name Authority Work Today

A Comparison of Types of Academic Libraries

By Susan K. Burke and Jay Shorten

This study compared different types and sizes of academic libraries on how they currently engage in name authority work. Findings were that smaller libraries were more likely to do their cataloging in-house and less likely to purchase vendor services. Large libraries and libraries at graduate institutions were more likely to engage in some outsourcing and were more likely to do name authority control for a variety of types of names and materials. The study documents name authority control practices before the implementation of the anticipated new cataloging rules. The results provide comparative data that could be useful for making decisions concerning, for example, allocating staff positions or budgets.

While the concept of name authority work is rooted deeply in the history of library cataloging, the form that it takes in today's library environment is very much a product of technological developments. Name authority practice changed significantly during the past three decades because of technological advances making cooperative name authority feasible, proliferation of vendor services for name authority, and changing cataloging rules. Through these and other changes, name authority has gone from a predominately in-house activity to a cooperative national and international endeavor. Historically, new cataloging rules introduced in 1978, *Anglo-American Cataloging Rules*, 2nd ed. (AACR2), significantly changed the creation of name headings, necessitating labor-intensive solutions.¹ Now cataloging is poised on the brink of a new set of cataloging rules, Resource Description and Access (RDA), and name authority practice likely will face new challenges in the near future.

This study compared name authority processes of different types of academic libraries to ascertain differences and similarities in name authority practice. Dividing academic libraries by type of institution (graduate, four-year schools, and two-year schools) and collection size, the study examined three aspects of name authority control: what name authority work is being done, how name authority processes are conducted at different libraries, and who does the authority work.

Background

Name authority control is one of the theoretical foundations of the organization of information and relies on the intellectual work of catalogers to link variations of an author's name under one heading so that a searcher can be reasonably certain that, if the name they seek exists in the catalog, they can find it and that all works by a given author are traceable under a single heading.² Both Jeng and

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Tillett made the point that this practice enhances the recall and precision of name searching in the library catalog.³ The justification for name authority control is that patrons, who may be less skilled in finding names, will not find the correct entry if information professionals do not supply the links between different forms of names. In 1985, Burger defined authority work in computerized catalogs as creating authority records, gathering these records into a file, linking authority records to bibliographic records, maintaining authority files and systems, and evaluating the results.⁴ He stated that the role of authority control is to facilitate access and that it aids in both the finding function and the gathering function of the library catalog.

Bangalore and Prabha found that in practice, libraries may opt for full authority control of all potential access points, moderate control of only headings with cross-references, or minimal control of only frequently used cross-references, and that deciding on the level of authority control is based on several factors, including collection size, patron body, and funding.⁵ Some libraries centralize authority control in one unit or with an individual while others decentralize the process. Bangalore and Prabha found that “library approaches to authority control vary widely.”⁶ Zhang noted that while authority work is routine for large research libraries, it has been more challenging for small and medium-size academic libraries.⁷ She went on to state that even in large research libraries the levels of control vary.

In the mid-1970s, changes in the ways that libraries performed name authority began to accelerate. The Library of Congress Name Authority File became the National Name Authority File (NAF) with the creation of Name Authority Cooperative Program (NACO) of the Program for Cooperative Cataloging (PCC) in 1976. In 1977, the Library of Congress (LC) started keeping a computerized LC/NAF, which it made available to other libraries in quarterly microfiche beginning in 1979. The LC/NAF then became available in machine-readable format through OCLC in December 1980.⁸ This was an important development for library online cooperative union catalogs, which existed in part as venues for libraries to share cataloging records. As libraries made the transition from card catalogs to computerized catalogs, and as those catalogs became linked to the online union catalogs, consistency in heading formation became essential for maximized search and retrieval.⁹ According to Taylor, vendors became involved and began offering various name authority control services around 1983.¹⁰

The new cataloging rules, RDA, soon will usher in changes to cataloging. The last major cataloging rule change had sweeping effects on cataloging policies and practices, including name authority. Notably, after the implementation of AACR2, catalogers were concerned that their name authority files that existed prior to AACR2 would no longer be in compliance with national rules, and they struggled

with solutions. Some libraries chose to avoid the conflict and closed their card catalogs in favor of switching to online catalogs.¹¹ Tracing family names is a new direction in which RDA is expected to move.¹² Families as a form of collective author have been used in certain information institutions such as archives, but not in libraries under the AACR2 rules. Although AACR2 did not cover family names, MARC21 has had an option to accommodate family names with an indicator of “3” in the name fields.¹³

Several potential future directions for developments in name authority control are being explored. The Virtual International Authority File, for example, is a joint project between the national libraries of Germany and France, the LC, and OCLC to “match and link the authority records for personal names in the retrospective personal name authority files of the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek (dnb), the Library of Congress (LC), and the Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF).”¹⁴ Another potential direction for name authority concerns international name authority control. In recent years, catalogers have been addressing the question of international authority and discussing the ramifications of different means of authority control. The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) proposal of an ISBN-type number for authors, the International Standard Authority Data Number (ISADN), to replace name authority control was initially introduced in 1980, and recently the idea has been gaining momentum. IFLA has a working group charged with defining the functional requirements of authority records, studying the feasibility of the ISADN, and serving as a liaison to other groups concerned with authority files.¹⁵ Recently, *Functional Requirements for Authority Data: A Conceptual Model*, edited by Patton, was published after being approved by the Standing Committees of the IFLA Cataloguing Section and the IFLA Classification Section.¹⁶

Concern over the cost of authority control, reflected in hours of cataloger time, is frequently discussed but is not a new issue. The following study question from a 1936 cataloging course syllabus from Columbia University School of Library Service illustrates this: “Catalogers are sometimes criticized because of the time and energy they spend in ferreting out the names of authors who wish to conceal their identity. What can you say in answer to this criticism?”¹⁷ In a 1953 reference to name authority, Tauber criticized the practice: “The cost of this research has increased considerably the cost of original cataloging, often needlessly and with no definitely beneficial results. The value of the information obtained, and its use by the public, has long been questioned in relation to the cost.”¹⁸ Bangalore and Prabha recorded the amount of time spent on each aspect of cataloging for seventy-five monographs. Name and series authority accounted for, on average, one-quarter of total cataloging time. In the most extreme example among the observed cases, the name/

series authority work, took 87 percent of the total cataloging time for a Ukrainian language book, and in several examples the authority work took approximately 50 percent of the cataloging time.¹⁹ Sullivan estimated that subject, name, and series authority work at Yale Law Library took one-third of the time to catalog a book.²⁰

Authority work entails more than checking authorities when cataloging an item. Even more time-consuming is the database maintenance task of continually comparing the in-house authority file to the long list of updated headings issued weekly by the LC.²¹ Calhoun and Oskins stated, "It is safe to assert that if it is not kept up to date in some manner, inaccurate and conflicting headings will accumulate rather rapidly in a local system file, even one which has been cleaned up and brought into conformance with the LCNAF and SAF before being loaded."²² Database maintenance is at the heart of the correct functioning of authority control. To control internal costs, in the late 1980s many libraries turned to vendors for a one-time cleaning of the automated authority file or ongoing authority file maintenance, or both. Such vendor services are expensive, and many studies have explored both the accuracy and the cost-effectiveness of going with vendor services.²³

To examine whether the costs involved in name authority control are justified, many researchers have analyzed whether name authority control actually improves the search results received by patrons in a computerized library catalog. An early study by Taylor in 1984 and a 1995 study by Bangalore both examined user transaction logs concerning name searches in OPACs to determine the usefulness of name authority control.²⁴ Both authors found most failed name searches in OPACs would not be helped by name authority control. Bangalore stated that she believed "that online linkage of authority records to bibliographic files is expensive, but justifiable."²⁵ She added, "Many authority records have no cross references, and many of the records with cross references are not the forms sought by users."²⁶ Both she and Taylor suggested that computer programming changes could boost name search matches such as inverting name searches automatically, imbedded spell-check, "order, spacing and punctuation inaccuracies, and common key-boarding errors."²⁷

In another study criticizing authority control, Jeng argued that authority control does not serve the needs of end-users as well as better search interfaces could and concluded that it is not a good use of time and resources.²⁸ Using another approach to evaluating authority work, Pappas examined error rates and found in an analysis of eight RLIN members' authority-controlled access points that 16 percent of personal name fields in MARC contained authority errors.²⁹ This represented one-quarter of all errors found in the 1,710 authority controlled headings in four hundred records analyzed. More recently the trend of advocating

against authority control may be reversing. In 2004, Byrum stated that there was a "generally skeptical attitude about the cost-effectiveness of name authority work that prevailed in the 1970s and into the 1980s," but that there is increased recognition by administrators of the value of authority control.³⁰

The final issue examined here is not one of name authority control *per se*, but of cataloging practice in general. Are libraries losing cataloging and other technical services positions? If so, how are they accommodating these changes? Wells collected data from seventy public graduate university libraries in the Southeast and found that 63 percent reported having lost technical services positions since 1990.³¹ Of those that had lost positions, three-quarters reported that the lost positions were librarian positions. Cataloging backlogs, cataloging new materials, and authority control were identified as the job tasks most strongly affected by the loss of positions.

Within cataloging, what types of employees are doing name authority work? Wolverton found that 94 percent of the doctoral institutions he studied stated authority work was done by Masters of Library and Information Science (MLIS) librarians, and 78 percent also had paraprofessional staff involvement.³² Wells reported that respondents, half of whom were from public libraries, in her study indicated that 80 percent of the authority work was done by MLIS librarians and 42 percent by paraprofessionals.³³ Bordeianu and Seiser surveyed libraries of the Association of Research Libraries in 1999 and found that 84.5 percent used paraprofessionals for copy cataloging and 67 percent used paraprofessionals for original cataloging.³⁴ They state that "several studies performed during the past 2 decades have indicated that paraprofessional participation in cataloging has been increasing steadily since 1977."³⁵

Research Problem

In theory, authority control is central to the ideals of information organization. Several authors have observed that, in practice, it is expensive and time-consuming in an era of stagnant library budgets and the loss of technical services personnel, and it is largely invisible to patrons.³⁶ In addition, studies such as those by Taylor and Bangalore found that authority control would only have a minimal effect on improving hits from patron searches.³⁷ Despite these issues, are libraries still pursuing name authority control for their collections? Are rates of participation in name authority control affected by institution type or collection size? The central hypothesis for this study was that graduate institutions and the largest libraries would engage in most aspects of name authority control and smaller libraries and institutions offering lower degree levels would do fewer aspects name authority control. This hypothesis was based on the assumption that libraries

with larger and more complex collections would derive more benefit from good name authority control, that they would be more likely to be authorized to contribute original name authority records to the NAF (i.e., have NACO-trained librarians), and—since they presumably have more financial and personnel resources—that they would be more likely to do their cataloging and name authority work in-house and less likely to outsource to vendors. The authors asked the following research questions:

1. What effect do institution type and collection size have on name authority work?
2. What name authority work is being done?
3. How are name authority processes conducted at different libraries?
4. Who does the authority work?

Research Method

The authors used stratified random sampling to select one hundred United States institutions from each of the following categories: two-year colleges (community colleges); four-year colleges (baccalaureate institutions), and graduate institutions. The samples were taken from the 2008 editions of Peterson's *Graduate Schools in the U.S.*, Peterson's *4 Year Colleges*, and Peterson's *2 Year Colleges*.³⁸ Contact information for someone in the library, preferably the library head of cataloging, head of technical services, or similar position was obtained from reference sources. During late November and early December 2008, the authors sent e-mail messages to the identified person inviting them to participate in a survey posted on the Web tool Survey Monkey or to forward the survey to an appropriate spokesperson for their library. After two weeks, a follow-up e-mail message was sent to stimulate additional responses. Graduate institutions had a response rate of 40 percent, four-year schools had 35 percent, and two-year schools had 24 percent, for a total of ninety-nine responding libraries out of the three hundred initially contacted. Although a probability sample was taken, results of the study should be generalized with caution to academic libraries as a whole because the response rates were fairly low and the final samples, especially for community colleges, were small.

Many of the survey questions were based on previous studies by Wells and Wolverton and were meant to expand upon the results that they found.³⁹ Wells compared public libraries with community colleges, four-year colleges, and university libraries in Mississippi. While she received a reasonable number of responses from public libraries (thirty-two), she only had data from sixteen community colleges, eight four-year schools, and seven universities. Wolverton had an excellent sample of 193 respondents, but he only

surveyed doctoral institutions, so his results cannot be generalized to smaller libraries or to libraries serving other types of academic institutions. Both of these researchers did an excellent job of addressing an information need in the cataloging authority control literature, and this study is meant to expand upon their contributions by comparing different institution types (as Wells did) with larger sample sizes. Other questions in this study were drawn from ideas from the literature and from the work experience of the study authors. See the appendix for the survey questions used.

The authors compared data with percentages. When the percentage differences were sizable, chi-square for independent groups was used to test for statistical significance of the difference. While percentages give an indication of differences between groups, the chi-square test indicates whether the differences between groups on that question were large enough that they were unlikely to have occurred by chance. The chi-square was calculated using frequencies in 2 x 2 contingency tables and tested for significance at the .05 level, which requires a chi-square result of greater than 3.841.

Discussion of the Independent Variables

The first research question introduced the independent variables that the authors used in the analysis of the other three research questions. One of the independent variables, institution type, was created through the stratified sampling process. The second independent variable, collection size, was created as follows: survey respondents were asked to provide the name of their institution so that publicly available library collection size information could be gathered. Most respondents (90 percent) did provide their institution name, and collection size data were gathered from the *American Library Directory 2008/2009*.⁴⁰ Institution name also was used to verify that responding institutions were correctly identified by institution type.

Collection sizes ranged from 4,100 volumes to 6,000,000 volumes, with 6,000,000 being an outlier. Without the outlier, collections ranged from 4,100 to 3,264,231 with a mean collection size of 329,998 volumes. Median collection size was much smaller at 117,737 volumes. The collection size variable was created by dividing collection sizes into three equal categories of 30 libraries each. The division between small and medium collections was at 93,580 volumes, and between medium and large collections at 215,596 volumes. Not all graduate institution libraries were large, and not all community college libraries were small (see table 1).

Findings

Because name authority work is part of cataloging in general, the first survey question was a background question that

Table 1. Collection Size by Institution Type

Collection Size in Volumes	Graduate % (n = 37)	4-Year % (n = 29)	2-Year % (n = 24)	Total
Smallest one-third: up to 95,580	5	31	79	30
Middle one-third: up to 215,596	32	45	21	30
Largest one-third: more than 215,596	62	24	0	30

Table 2. Cataloging and Name Authority Practice by Institution Type and Collection Size

Cataloging	Graduate % (n = 39)*	4-Year % (n = 35)*	2-Year % (n = 24)*	Largest % (n = 30)*	Middle % (n = 30)*	Smallest % (n = 30)*
Almost all done in-house	58	71	88	43	90	80
Most done in-house, some outsourced	30	9	0	40	0	3
Proportion in-house/outsourced about even	8	11	0	10	3	7
Most outsourced, some done in-house	3	3	8	3	7	3
Almost all outsourced	3	6	4	3	0	7
Name Authority Work Done						
Always	31	29	29	30	43	23
Usually	33	26	38	40	27	30
Sometimes	28	29	21	27	20	30
Never	8	17	13	3	10	17
NACO-Authorized	35	25	0	41	16	5

*Note: This is the overall *n*; however, there was slight variation per item for *n* as not every respondent answered every question.

asked how much cataloging was done by the library (in-house) compared to cataloging provided by a vendor (outsourced). Two-year institutions were most likely to report doing “almost all” cataloging in-house at 88 percent compared to 58 percent of graduate institutions, a statistically significant difference. The differences between graduate and four-year institutions and between two-year and four-year institutions were not significant. Graduate institutions were most likely to state that “most cataloging is done in-house, but some is outsourced.” When the answer categories “almost all” and “most” were combined, graduate institutions and two-year schools were equivalent at 88 percent of both types, along with 80 percent of four-year schools.

Concerning cataloging practices by collection size, 90 percent of mid-size libraries and 80 percent of small libraries stated that “almost all” cataloging was done in-house, both significantly more likely to do so than large libraries at 43 percent. When “almost all” and “most” were combined, all collection sizes agreed at 83 to 90 percent (see table 2).

The Name Authority Cooperative Program (NACO) of the Program for Cooperative Cataloging allows authorized, trained participants to contribute original name authority records to the NAF regulated by LC. In this study, large libraries were significantly more likely than small libraries to be NACO contributors, and graduate institutions were

significantly more likely to be NACO-authorized than two-year schools (see table 2).

Authority Work Being Done

The second research question asked, What name authority work is being done? This research question included, Is authority work being done at all? For what types of names? On what types of materials?

Libraries were asked to indicate on an ordinal scale of “always,” “usually,” “sometimes,” and “never” whether name authority work was done as part of cataloging in their library. Data showed little variation by institution type, with about 30 percent of all types stating they “always” did name authority work. By collection size, 70 percent of both large and medium libraries reported doing authority work “always” or “usually,” compared to 53 percent of small collections, a difference that was not statistically significant. Only 3 percent of large collections said they “never” did name authority compared to 17 percent of small collections. More details on the results of this question are in table 2.

Respondents were asked to identify which types of names were controlled in their institutions. In an analysis by institution type, personal names were the mostly likely to be controlled, reported by more than 90 percent of all types.

Table 3. Types of Name Authority Work Done by Institution Type and Collection Size

	Graduate % (n = 39)*	4-Year % (n = 35)*	2-Year % (n = 24)*	Largest % (n = 30)*	Middle % (n = 30)*	Smallest % (n = 30)*
Types of Names Controlled						
Personal	100	93	95	100	100	92
Corporate	83	73	80	93	89	58
Geographic	78	7	80	90	85	54
Series	78	73	55	90	67	58
Conference	75	63	55	83	82	42
Uniform titles	69	47	50	76	56	38
Types of Materials Controlled						
Monographs	100	97	95	100	100	92
Other nonbook materials	75	72	62	90	74	48
Serials	69	48	43	72	56	40
Electronic materials	58	55	29	69	63	20

*Note: This is the overall *n*; however there was slight variation per item for *n*, as not every respondent answered every question.

Corporate and geographic names were controlled by 73 to 83 percent of all institutions. Uniform titles were least likely to be controlled, with only about half of two-year and four-year schools and 69 percent of graduate institutions doing so. Control of uniform titles was significantly more likely to be done by graduate institutions than by four-year schools (see table 3).

When examining which types of names were controlled by collection size, several differences were statistically significant. While nearly all libraries controlled personal names, large libraries were significantly more likely than small libraries to control all other types of names: corporate, geographic, series, conference, and uniform titles. Medium libraries also were significantly more likely to control corporate, geographic, and conference names than small libraries. These results are reported in detail in table 3. When the name types from this “check all that apply” survey question were summed, half of the libraries surveyed controlled all six types of names.

Libraries also make decisions about which types of materials will receive name authority control. Nearly all (95 to 100 percent) of all institutions, regardless of type, controlled names for monographs. Other material types were less likely to be controlled, with about half to three-quarters of graduate and four-year institutions controlling names for serials, electronic materials, and “other nonbook materials.” Two-year schools were least likely to control nonmonographs, particularly electronic materials, for which only 29 percent of them did so. The differences by institution types for different materials were significant between graduate institutions and two-year schools in the control of serials and electronic materials (see table 3).

Name Authority Processes at Different Libraries

Research question 3 asked, How are name authority processes conducted at different libraries? This question included an examination of when in the cataloging process the name authority work was completed, a discussion of name authority verification, issues concerning authority modules, and processes for updating headings.

Authority work can be done at different points in the library process: precataloging, such as during acquisitions; during cataloging; or postcataloging, such as during database maintenance. In this study only two libraries, one small and one large, reported doing the bulk of name authority work during the precataloging stage. Large libraries were significantly more likely than small or mid-size libraries to do their name authority work postcataloging and, correspondingly, significantly less likely to do name authority work during cataloging. While two-year colleges were more likely to do so during postcataloging, none of the differences by institution type were statistically significant (see table 4).

The authors asked respondents if they verified name authority when doing original cataloging, copy cataloging, or upon receiving vendor-supplied cataloging records. Answer categories were recoded into a dichotomous “always or usually” and “sometimes or never.” Institution type showed little difference in practices for original cataloging; 75 to 82 percent verified name authority. Approximately half of all institution types also verified name authority when copy cataloging. Two-year schools were significantly more likely to verify name authority on received vendor records than graduate institutions. Differences by collection size

Table 4. Name Authority Processes by Institution Type and Collection Size

When Name Authority Work is Done	Graduate % (n = 39)*	4-Year % (n = 35)*	2-Year % (n = 24)*	Largest % (n = 30)*	Middle % (n = 30)*	Smallest % (n = 30)*
Precataloging	3	0	5	3	0	4
During cataloging	57	50	68	31	64	77
Postcataloging	41	50	27	66	36	19
Always/Usually Check Verification Sources						
Original cataloging	82	79	75	87	80	69
Copy cataloging	46	47	54	40	70	45
On records received from vendors	29	43	57	35	50	42
Verification Sources Used						
OCLC	84	79	73	90	86	69
LC online authority file	46	52	55	41	55	58
Local authority file	43	36	36	31	38	52
Regional cataloging system	0	12	9	3	0	12
Other libraries' databases	3	9	9	3	3	15
Vendor files	11	0	14	10	14	0
Used for Updating Existing Headings						
Staff and patron suggestions	56	43	55	48	50	59
Heading changes listed by LC	50	46	60	55	54	55
Reports generated by online catalog	47	46	55	62	46	41
Periodic file maintenance by a vendor	34	39	30	38	38	18
Vendor notifications of heading changes	31	11	20	35	21	5
Authority Control Module (ACM)						
ACM actively integrated with bibliographic file	53	59	50	60	57	47
ACM not actively integrated	26	18	21	30	23	17
Library catalog has ACM, but not using it	13	9	4	10	3	10
Library catalog does not have ACM	8	15	25	0	17	27
Library has no computerized catalog	0	0	0	0	0	0

*Note: This is the overall *n*; however there was slight variation per item for *n*, as not every respondent answered every question.

were greater than by institution type, but most of these differences still were not significant. The only significant difference by collection size was that medium libraries were significantly more likely than large libraries to verify name authority when copy cataloging (see table 4).

All institution types and library sizes were more likely to use OCLC than any other source for verifying name authority. The next most popular verification source was the LC authorities website. The other frequently used source was the library's local authority file. The differences between library types or sizes were not statistically significant. Potential verification sources used by 15 percent or less in any category were vendor files, regional cataloging systems, or other libraries' databases (such as through Z39.50). When verification sources were grouped into no-cost sources (LC

authorities, other libraries' catalogs, and local authority file) versus purchased sources (OCLC and vendor files), there was no difference by institution type but there was an important difference by library size. Small libraries were significantly less likely to use purchased sources for name authority verification than medium or large libraries. Forty percent of small libraries used no purchased sources compared to 17 percent of large and 13 percent of medium libraries. No difference was found between institution types on the use of no-cost sources (see table 4).

The LC/NAF periodically updates its authority records, and libraries must maintain their authority files to stay current. Respondents could check several categories that described how existing headings were identified for updating in their authority file. The most commonly used methods

were suggestions by librarians, staff, or patrons, and checking the LC's lists of changed headings. The next most likely source was reports generated by the online catalog, followed by periodic file maintenance by a vendor and vendor notifications of changed headings. While the authors found slight differences between institution types and library sizes, the only noteworthy difference was that large libraries were significantly more likely than small libraries to use vendor notifications of heading changes.

Respondents were asked how their authority control module interacted with their library catalog (see question 10 in the appendix for the expanded wording of the question). The authors did not find significant differences between different types of libraries or different sizes of the libraries in this question. Community colleges were slightly less likely to have an authority control module than four-year schools and graduate institutions, and small libraries were less likely to have a module than medium or large libraries. Small libraries were slightly less likely to have an authority module that was actively integrated so that changes made to the authority file are automatically reflected in the bibliographic catalog. Responses to this question are shown in table 4.

Who Does Authority Control Work?

Research question 4 was, Who does the authority work? This included responses about which employees do the work as well as how authority work is distributed within the cataloging division and within the library. Is the work centralized to one person or does each cataloger do their own authority work? Is it done in the cataloging division or in a database management division such as through vendor updates? How are vendors involved? Have staffing changes such as downsizing affected the name authority work done or which employees were doing it?

The first part of this research question asked what types of library employees do name authority work. Across all institution types, librarians with MLIS degrees were the most likely to do name authority work, at more than 90 percent in graduate institutions and four-year schools and 77 percent in two-year schools. Paraprofessional or clerical staff also were highly involved, particularly in graduate institutions. Few libraries reported having this work done by non-MLIS librarians or temporary workers, such as graduate assistants, student workers, or interns. By collection size, MLIS librarians did name authority control at more than 90 percent of large and medium libraries and at 77 percent of small libraries. Large libraries were significantly more likely to use staff for name authority work than medium libraries (see table 5).

To ascertain workflow within the cataloging departments, the authors asked respondents whether authority work was done by each cataloger or done by one or a few

people for all the catalogers. Approximately 20 percent of graduate institutions and 60 percent of four-year and two-year colleges stated that the question was irrelevant to them because their cataloging departments were too small to make this distinction. For all libraries for which this question was applicable, two-thirds reported that each cataloger did his or her own authority work, while in one-third of libraries a few people did the authority work for everybody.

When asked in a "check all that apply" format who does the maintenance of the authority file, the vast majority of all library types and sizes stated that this work was done by people who work in cataloging. A small number in each category also specified this work was done by people in the database or systems unit. While approximately 35 percent of libraries in all categories also reported outsourcing this work to vendors, outsourcing was more likely in large libraries (37 percent) and unlikely in small libraries (11 percent). The difference between large and small libraries was statistically significant (see table 5).

The authors found no significant difference by institution type or library size between those who reported using vendors for some aspect of name authority work and those who did not use vendors. Large and medium libraries were more likely to report using vendors than small libraries, but the differences were not significant (see table 5). The authors asked those libraries that did report vendor use to indicate all relevant types of use. Only fourteen two-year and twelve small libraries reported using vendors. To boost the strength of the statistics, the medium and small libraries were combined and two- and four-year institution answers were combined for analysis. When examined individually, medium and small libraries and two- and four-year institutions answered these questions similarly, so pooling their answers was not a problematic approach. Small and medium libraries were twice as likely as large libraries to have purchased a one-time cleanup of their authority file or to purchase periodic cleanups. Large libraries were twice as likely as medium and small libraries to contract for an initial cleanup followed by ongoing reviews of new cataloging. Large libraries also were twice as likely to contract for vendor notification of changes to the library's existing headings. Although less than 20 percent of large libraries reported purchasing cataloging with name authority along with new library materials, they were more than twice as likely as small and medium libraries to report doing so. Differences in practice by institution type were not as dramatic as those by collection size except for the purchasing of cataloging from vendors: Almost no two- and four-year schools reported using vendors (3 percent), but a full 20 percent of graduate institutions did so (see table 6). The authors asked respondents who reported using vendors if they were satisfied with the services they received. The vast majority, 93 to 95 percent, reported that they were "satisfied" or "somewhat satisfied" with their vendor services.

Table 5. Responsibility for Name Authority Work by Institution Type and Collection Size

Types of Employees	Graduate % (n = 39)	4-Year % (n = 35)	2-Year % (n = 24)	Largest % (n = 30)	Middle % (n = 30)	Smallest % (n = 30)
Librarians with MLIS degree	92	93	77	90	96	77
Librarians without MLIS degree	5	10	5	10	4	8
Paraprofessional or clerical staff	57	37	41	63	32	42
Temporary workers	8	10	0	13	7	0
Authority File Maintenance						
People in cataloging or technical services	92	87	100	93	100	93
People in the database or systems unit	14	13	9	17	7	11
Outsourced to vendors	28	29	23	37	22	11
Use of Vendors for Name Authority						
Used vendors in some capacity	55	52	58	63	60	40
Loss of Librarian Positions in Cataloging						
Library lost cataloging positions	64	39	39	55	50	37

*Note: This is the overall *n*; however there was slight variation per item for *n* as not every respondent answered every question.

Table 6. Use of Vendors by Institution Type and Collection Size

Purposes for Which Used Vendors*	Graduate % (n = 21)	2- & 4-Year % (n = 31)	Large % (n = 19)	Medium & Small % (n = 30)
One-time cleanup of authority file	35	43	28	52
Periodic cleanups of authority file	20	33	17	31
Initial cleanup with ongoing reviews	40	37	50	28
Notification of changes to existing headings	45	23	50	24
Supplies cataloging with name authority for new purchases	20	3	17	7

*Calculated only for those who reported using vendors.

Previous studies in the literature have reported lost librarian positions in technical services departments in the past decade and resultant changes in work practices because of these losses.⁴¹ To verify this assertion and ascertain how this has affected authority control practice, this survey included a question about position loss and its impact. Graduate institutions were nearly twice as likely to report having lost positions as were four-year or two-year schools. When examined by library size, one-third of small libraries had lost cataloging positions and approximately half of medium and large libraries had lost cataloging positions (see table 5). Overall, 48 percent of respondents reported having lost a librarian position and of those, 47 percent indicated that the loss of the position did not result in a change in the authority control process. Another 33 percent stated that it led to a reduction of authority work and 12 percent said it resulted in authority work being shifted from librarian to staff responsibility. Only 9 percent reported that it led to the outsourcing of authority work. When those libraries that had lost positions are examined by collection size, two-thirds of large libraries, half of small libraries, and one-third of

medium libraries stated that the loss had affected name authority practice.

The survey ended with an open-ended question that invited respondents to make any other comments about name authority control in their libraries. The thirty-seven comments in this area revolved around three themes. The first theme involved problems with the integrated system or vendors preventing effective authority work. Sometimes the authority module was not turned on. Some people found their systems' authority interface to be awkward (or made their work more time-consuming instead of less) and did not allow automatic changes to be done. Others complained that the integrated library system vendors were slow to make their authority modules work better. Others found that vendors did not update records often enough, so that there could be two forms of names in the catalog. Second, some libraries commented that they only were able to keep a partial authority file of personal names. Third, some libraries remarked that their authority work had been done as a batch cleanup at the time they obtained the current library system, but it had not been kept up-to-date afterward.

Analysis

Bangalore and Prabha discussed variations in the application of authority control depending on collection size, patron body, and funding, noting that there was a great variety of authority practice among libraries.⁴² This study tested their assertion by examining institution type and library size in relationship to name authority control in cataloging. While both of these variables were related to differences in practice, analyses showed more variation by collection size than by institution type.

Initially, the authors asked respondents how much cataloging was done in-house at their library as opposed to outsourced. For all institution types and library sizes, 80 to 90 percent stated that “almost all” or “most” cataloging was done in-house. Surprisingly, large libraries and libraries at graduate institutions were significantly more likely than other libraries to outsource some of their cataloging, while other libraries were more likely to do almost all of it in-house.

One of the central hypotheses in this study was that large libraries and graduate institutions would be most likely to do various kinds of authority work and most likely to do the work in-house. The first part of this hypothesis was partially supported—large and medium libraries were more likely to report that they “always” or “usually” did name authority, although there was little difference by institution type. This study and Wolverton’s both found that almost all graduate institutions do at least some authority work, with only 5 percent of Wolverton’s and 8 percent of this study’s graduate institution respondents stating that they never did authority work.⁴³

The twenty-five libraries that did not do name authority work reported several reasons for not doing so. Slightly less than half (48 percent) stated that they would like to do authority control but did not have the staff to do it. Another 40 percent stated they would like to do it but did not have the budget to support it. One-fifth (20 percent) stated that name authority control was not that useful because of their collection type or size. Few libraries (16 percent) chose the option that name authority control is of less value in an online catalog. A two-year and a four-year school said that name authority control costs more than the value it adds to records. These findings echoed those of Wells, whose respondents cited predominately lack of funds or lack of staff time as reasons not to do authority control.⁴⁴ In Wolverton’s study, of those libraries that did not do authority work, a similar 41 percent claimed insufficient funds, but half as many as the current study (24 percent) stated insufficient staff.⁴⁵ Wolverton’s study also found that 47 percent claimed they did not have time to do the work, a variable that could be related to insufficient staff.

An aspect of doing name authority work is establishing

new headings, a task for which not all libraries are authorized to contribute outside of their local authority file. Wolverton’s study only collected data from institutions with the Carnegie classification as Doctoral/Research Extensive or Intensive, and 41 percent of his respondents stated they were NACO-authorized, compared to 35 percent of the graduate institutions in this study, a similar result.⁴⁶ Comparing within institution types in this study, graduate institutions were significantly more likely to be NACO-authorized than two-year institutions, but not significantly more likely than four-year schools. By collection size, large libraries were significantly more likely to be NACO-authorized than small libraries, but not significantly more likely than medium libraries. Being NACO-authorized was related to being more likely to do name authority: 82 percent of NACO-authorized compared to 63 percent of non NACO-authorized libraries said they “always” or “usually” did name authority, though this difference was not statistically significant.

Personal names were by far the most likely to be controlled by libraries in this study, and uniform titles least likely. Large libraries were significantly more likely to do name authority control than small libraries on names other than personal names. Medium libraries also were significantly more likely to control some types of names—corporate, geographic, and conference—than small libraries. Wolverton found a slightly lower percentage of graduate institutions controlling personal names, 88 percent compared to 100 percent in this study, but his respondents reported a slightly higher percent controlling conference names, series, and uniform titles (79 to 88 percent compared to 69 to 78 percent in this study).⁴⁷ It is difficult to compare Wells’ results across institution types because her sample sizes were too small to calculate percentages by type.⁴⁸

Almost all library types reported controlling name authorities for monographs. Serials and electronic materials were significantly more likely to be controlled by graduate institutions than by two-year schools. By collection size, while name authority was controlled for monographs by almost all libraries, large libraries were significantly more likely than small libraries to control serials, electronic materials, and other nonbook materials. Medium libraries also were significantly more likely to control electronic materials than were small libraries.

The timing of when authority work is done can vary between institutions. While institution type was only moderately linked to when name authority work was done, collection size was strongly related to the timing of the authority work. Small and medium libraries were significantly more likely to do their name authority during the cataloging process and large libraries significantly more likely to do it postcataloging, such as during database maintenance. Very few libraries reported doing name authority during a pre-cataloging process.

Two-year schools were significantly more likely to verify name authority on received vendor records than were graduate institutions. The only significant difference by collection size was that medium libraries were significantly more likely than large libraries to do name authority work when copy cataloging. Libraries were most likely to use OCLC for verifying name authority, followed by using the LC authorities website and libraries' local authority files. Libraries were unlikely to use vendor files, regional cataloging systems, or other libraries' databases. Small libraries were significantly less likely to use verification sources that cost money, but there were no meaningful differences between library types and sizes on the use of no-cost verification sources. Wells' respondents were most likely to access name authority through their local authority file (53 percent, a bit more likely than respondents in the current study) and OCLC (45 percent, much less likely than respondents in this study).⁴⁹ Only 13 percent of Wells' respondents used the LC internal system, as the no-cost LC authorities website was not yet available at the time of her study.

When the authors asked respondents about their catalog's authority control module, they found few differences between libraries. Depending upon institution type or collection size, 47 to 60 percent of respondents reported that their authority control module was integrated with their catalog. Small libraries and libraries at two-year colleges were more likely than other libraries not to have an authority module, and small libraries were particularly less likely to have an authority module that was integrated with the bibliographic file. In 2000, Wells' study found a higher percentage of libraries without authority modules—36 percent compared to the 0 to 27 percent in this study.⁵⁰ This difference could be a result of eight years of continuing technological development or perhaps because half of her respondents were public libraries while this study only examined academic libraries. Wells also had several respondents who reported not having an online catalog at all, whereas no libraries in this study lacked online catalogs.

Wolverton found that authority work was done by MLIS librarians in 94 percent of doctoral institutions, very similar to the 92 percent of graduate institutions and 93 percent of four-year schools found in this study.⁵¹ His study reported a higher rate of participation by paraprofessional staff—78 percent compared to 57 percent of graduate institutions and 37 percent of four-year schools found in this study. Wells noted a slightly lower rate of participation by MLIS librarians (80 percent) and a 42 percent rate of involvement by paraprofessionals.⁵²

Bangalore and Prabha suggested that authority work is centralized in some libraries to one or a few individuals while in other libraries it is decentralized.⁵³ In this study, two-thirds of those respondents whose cataloging departments were large enough for this question to be applicable

reported that authority work was decentralized to each cataloger while one-third said it was centralized to one or a few people.

Librarians have expressed concern about the deprofessionalization of cataloging as cataloging procedures have changed over the past thirty years. As quoted earlier, Bordeianu and Seiser stated a decade ago that "paraprofessional participation in cataloging has been increasing steadily since 1977."⁵⁴ Wells and Wolverton asked their respondents about librarians versus paraprofessionals in name authority control, and this study asked this question again.⁵⁵ All three studies found that between 75 and 90 percent of institutions reported that name authority control was done by MLIS librarians. Paraprofessional involvement in authority control was reported by 42 to 78 percent of libraries. Graduate institutions were much more likely to involve paraprofessionals in this activity than two-year or four-year schools. Other than graduate institutions, fewer than half of libraries reported paraprofessional involvement in authority control, so one might conclude that authority control is still predominately treated as a professional activity in library practice.

There was a substantial difference between library types and sizes concerning outsourcing. Contrary to the study hypotheses, large libraries and graduate institutions were the least likely to do "almost all" of their cataloging and name authority work in house, but instead they were more likely to report some outsourcing for cataloging and authority work. They also were more likely than small libraries to contract for ongoing vendor services, such as an initial cleansing with ongoing reviews, vendor notifications of name authority changes for existing name headings, and receiving cataloging records with purchased materials. Large libraries were much more likely to report doing their name authority control during database maintenance rather than during cataloging itself; this also may be a reflection of the use of vendor services. Small and medium libraries were more likely to purchase one-time or occasional vendor services, such as file cleanups.

This study had a slightly higher rate of graduate institutions reporting using vendors for authority work—53 percent compared to 45 percent in Wolverton's research. However, the two groups used vendors differently. Vendors performed a one-time run of the authority files of 35 percent of respondents in this study, compared to 23 percent of Wolverton's respondents. Additionally, 40 percent (compared to 60 percent of Wolverton's respondents) employed an initial run with ongoing reviews, and 45 percent (compared to Wolverton's 65 percent) had vendors supply notification of changes in existing authority headings. This study, then, showed graduate institutions with less of an ongoing relationship with vendors than the previous study found.⁵⁶

Wells found that two-thirds of technical services departments at graduate institutions had lost positions through

restructuring or downsizing, and this study also found two-thirds of graduate institutions had lost cataloging positions.⁵⁷ This trend was less pronounced in two-year schools and small libraries, where approximately 40 percent reported lost positions. A possible reason for this may be that smaller libraries have fewer positions to lose. An administrator might hesitate to cut the only staff or librarian position in a small cataloging department, but reducing staff might seem more manageable in a larger department with several employees. The loss of staff positions only affected the name authority control practice in some libraries, and this was most likely to happen in large libraries. These data suggest that different institution types and sizes lost positions at different rates, and the results of the losses were experienced differently by different kinds of libraries.

Conclusions

This study had two main aims: to build upon previous research on name authority control in order to enhance knowledge of how name authority work is being conducted by different types of academic libraries, and to capture a snapshot of how name authority work is currently being done before the new cataloging rules lead to changes in practice. The results will allow future research to study the effect of the new rules on name authority practice. For example, the concept and use of uniform titles will be somewhat different in the RDA cataloging rules, therefore a useful future research question might consider whether the control of uniform titles will increase under the new rules. This study may provide information that will help explore the effect of international developments in name author control on name authority practice in the United States. The results of this study also could be useful to administrators who are evaluating cataloging practice in their libraries. Knowledge of how similar institutions are participating in name authority could be helpful in decision-making processes for allocating budgets and staff positions or for considering various outsourcing services.

Much of the literature concerned whether name authority control added enough value to records to justify the cost. While this study did not examine the efficacy of name authority for the end user, the results show that name authority work is very entrenched in academic library practice, almost universally so for the control of personal names and for monographs. This seems to indicate that its value is accepted in the profession.

The foundational hypothesis of this study was partially incorrect and partially supported. Contrary to expectations, libraries at graduate institutions and the largest libraries were the most likely to outsource some of their cataloging and some of their authority control, while smaller libraries

and libraries at nongraduate institutions were more likely to do this work in-house. The remaining part of the central hypothesis was supported—large libraries and those at graduate institutions were more likely to participate in more aspects of name authority control than other libraries, controlling a wider variety of names and controlling names for more types of materials. While previous studies analyzed work processes by institution type, this study found that the larger differences in practice were more associated with collection size than with institution type. Researchers should keep this in mind when designing future studies.

The authors identified several areas of statistical significance when libraries were compared by collection size. Large libraries were significantly more likely than small libraries to be NACO contributors. They were significantly more likely to control every type of listed name other than personal names. Large libraries were more likely than small or medium libraries to do their authority work post-cataloging, such as during database maintenance, and more likely than small libraries to use vendor notices for heading changes and to contract with vendors for file maintenance. They were more likely to use purchased sources (such as OCLC) for verifying name authority. Additionally, they were more likely than small libraries to have paraprofessional staff doing authority work. Medium libraries were significantly more likely than large libraries to verify name headings when doing copy cataloging and significantly more likely than small libraries to control corporate, geographic, and conference names. They also were more likely than small libraries to use purchased sources for heading verification. Small and medium libraries were significantly more likely than large libraries to state that they did “almost all” cataloging in-house. An analysis of which items were significantly different by collection size suggests that the majority of practices in which large libraries were significantly more likely to engage than small libraries concerned the use of purchased vendor services and therefore were budget-related.

Fewer areas revealed a statistically significant difference by type of institution. Graduate institutions were significantly more likely than two-year schools to be NACO-authorized and were significantly more likely than two-year schools to control name authority for serials and electronic materials. They also were significantly more likely than four-year schools to control uniform titles. Two-year schools were significantly more likely than graduate institutions to state that “almost all” of their cataloging was done in-house and to state that they verified name authority on the records that they receive from vendors. For libraries by type of institution, areas with statistically significant differences generally concerned types of name authority work being done.

This study did not collect data about budgets and funding, but the findings highlighted many questions about the effects of funding on name authority practice. A variety of

patterns in the data suggest that name authority procedures followed by different-size libraries could be related to limits imposed by the smaller budgets of small libraries compared to the budgets of larger libraries. Small libraries were less likely to use vendor services for cataloging and name authority work. They also were less likely to purchase services such as OCLC for verifying name authority. When they did use vendors, they were more likely to use a one-time service or an occasional cleanup rather than ongoing reviews, ongoing vendor notification of name authority changes, or other ongoing vendor work. They also were less likely to have an authority control module as part of their library catalog. The most common reason given by small libraries for why they did not control name authorities was because they did not have the staff to do so. Future studies could benefit from asking more explicit questions concerning the effect of the budget on name authority decisions.

Replicating this study with public libraries and perhaps school library media centers might be valuable. Collecting this additional information would allow a much more in-depth comparison of name authority practice across library types. A larger sample size would be helpful so that the results have more weight and because larger samples lend themselves to additional statistical techniques.

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Appendix. Survey Instrument

I. Name Authority Work Done at Your Library

The following questions reflect what type of name authority work is done at your library.

1. In order to get an idea of how much cataloging is done in-house compared to cataloging provided by a vendor (outsourced), please pick the following statement that most accurately describes cataloging of new items in your library:
 - a. Almost all cataloging is done in-house.
 - b. Most cataloging is done in-house, but some is outsourced.
 - c. The proportion of items cataloged in-house and those outsourced is roughly even.
 - d. Most cataloging is outsourced, but some is done in-house.
 - e. Almost all cataloging is outsourced.
2. Is name authority work done as part of cataloging in your library?
 - a. Always
 - b. Usually
 - c. Sometimes
 - d. Never
3. For which kinds of materials is name authority work done? (Circle all that apply.)
 - a. Monographs
 - b. Serials
 - c. Electronic materials
 - d. Other nonbook materials
 - e. Not applicable

4. Which types of names are controlled in your library? (Circle all that apply.)
 - a. Personal names
 - b. Corporate names
 - c. Conference names
 - d. Geographic names
 - e. Series names
 - f. Uniform titles
 - g. Not applicable
5. Are name authorities checked when doing original cataloging of materials?
 - a. Always
 - b. Usually
 - c. Sometimes
 - d. Never
6. Are name authorities checked when materials are copy cataloged?
 - a. Always
 - b. Usually
 - c. Sometimes
 - d. Never
7. Are name authorities checked on cataloging records received from vendors?
 - a. Always
 - b. Usually
 - c. Sometimes
 - d. Never
8. What sources are used in your library to verify name authority? (Circle all that apply.)
 - a. Local authority file
 - b. OCLC authority file
 - c. Library of Congress Authorities (authorities.loc.gov)
 - d. Regional cooperative cataloging system
 - e. Other libraries' databases (with Z39.50 for example)
 - f. Vendor files
 - g. Not applicable
 - h. Other (please specify)
9. At what point in the cataloging process is the bulk of name authority work done in your library?
 - a. Precataloging during acquisitions
 - b. During cataloging
 - c. Postcataloging, such as during database maintenance
 - d. Not applicable (library does not do name authority work)

II. Your Library's In-House Authority File

The following questions concern your library's in-house authority file.

10. Please choose the response that most accurately reflects your library catalog's authority control module:
 - a. The authority control module is actively integrated with the online catalog (cross references and/or changes made to the file are automatically reflected in the bibliographic catalog).
 - b. The authority control module is not actively integrated (changes to the authority records also need to be made in the bibliographic records).
 - c. Our library's computer catalog does have an authority control module but we are not using it.
 - d. Our library's computer catalog does not have an authority control module.
 - e. Our library does not have a computerized catalog.
11. How are existing headings updated in your library's name authority control file? (Circle all that apply.)
 - a. Using reports generated by the online catalog
 - b. Using vendor notifications of changes to existing headings

- c. Inputting changes in headings listed by the Library of Congress
 - d. Periodic file maintenance by a vendor
 - e. Suggestions by other library staff (i.e., reference librarians) and/or patrons
 - f. Not applicable
12. Who performs the authority file maintenance work? (Circle all that apply.)
- a. People who work in the cataloging/technical services unit
 - b. People who work in the database/systems maintenance unit
 - c. Outsourced to vendors
 - d. Not applicable

III. Who Does Name Authority Work for Your Library?

The following questions concern the people involved in doing name authority control work in your library, and what relationship your library has with a vendor for name authority control.

13. What types of library employees do name authority work in your library? (Circle all that apply.)
- a. Librarians with an MLIS degree
 - b. Librarians without an MLIS degree
 - c. Paraprofessional and/or clerical staff
 - d. Temporary workers (such as student workers, graduate assistants, interns, and so on)
 - e. Not applicable
 - f. Other (please specify)
14. Does each person who is cataloging an item do the name authority control for the piece they are working on, or is the name authority control work centralized to a limited number of people?
- a. Each person does his/her own name authority work.
 - b. A few people concentrate on name authority work and provide it for all the catalogers.
 - c. This question is not applicable because our cataloging department is very small.
 - d. This question is not applicable because name authority control is done outside of the cataloging unit.
 - e. Not applicable (library does not do name authority work).
15. The library literature reports that many libraries have lost staffing since 1990, particularly in their technical services units. Concerning this issue, please indicate which answer best represents your library:
- a. Cataloging has lost positions leading us to reduce our name authority control efforts.
 - b. Cataloging has lost professional positions and name authority work has been shifted to staff as a result.
 - c. Cataloging has lost positions and outsourced name authority to a vendor as a result.
 - d. Cataloging has lost positions, but that has not affected the name authority control work done.
 - e. Our cataloging division has not lost positions.
 - f. Our cataloging division has gained positions.
16. How many librarians are employed in your cataloging unit?
17. How many paraprofessional/clerical staff are employed in your cataloging unit?
18. Is your library authorized through NACO to establish name authority records for the national authority file?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Don't know
19. If your library has used a vendor for name authority control processes, what type of services did the vendor provide to your library? (Circle all that apply.)
- a. One-time cleanup of the name authority file
 - b. Periodic cleanups of the name authority file
 - c. Initial cleanup, followed by ongoing reviews of new cataloging
 - d. Vendor supplies notification of changes to the library's existing headings
 - e. Vendor supplies cataloging with name authority for library's new purchases
 - f. Not applicable
 - g. Other (please specify)

20. If your library has used a vendor for name authority control processes, how satisfied are you with the results?
- Satisfied
 - Somewhat satisfied
 - Somewhat dissatisfied
 - Dissatisfied
 - Not applicable

IV. General Questions

21. If your library does not engage in name authority control either in-house or outsourcing to a vendor, why has the decision been made not to do name authority control? (Circle all that apply.)
- Name authority control is of less value in an online catalog.
 - Name authority control is not that useful given our library collection's type/size.
 - Name authority control costs more than the value it adds to records.
 - We would like to do name authority control but do not have the budget for it.
 - We would like to do name authority control but do not have the staff for it.
 - Not applicable
 - Other (please specify)
22. What is the name of your institution?
23. If you have any other comments about name authority control in your library that you would like to make, please do so here.