

CONOR.SR Authority File in the COBISS.SR Library System – current situation and perspective

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ABSTRACT: Authority control, as a process in which the unique form of authorized access point (authority headings) is determined and established, was developed in the seventies of the 20th century. However, this concept in Serbia began to develop late, in 2006 by establishing the basic principles of authority control. The selected solution refers only to libraries that work in the library information system COBISS.SR. The initial authority file was created in 2013 and the CONOR.SR was finally established in April 2019, and has been growing very rapidly ever since. Working with the new COBISS3/Cataloguing software with authority control undoubtedly improves the work process in the co-operative cataloguing system, but on the other hand, there are still inconsistency in work, deficiency of handbooks in libraries, insufficiency of education and professional conscience of librarians.

KEYWORDS: authority control, authority file for personal names, CONOR.SR, COBISS.SR, record editing.

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1 Introduction

Authority control as a process in which the unique (preferential) form of authorized access point (authority headings) is determined and established, and then used exclusively to mark a certain entity or concept, is an imperative of any well-organized library system. At the UNESCO conference in

1974, it was recommended that each national bibliographic agency should be responsible for establishing unique form of the author's name from their own country and create authority files for them, and for corporate bodies too (Којевић и др., 2011, 307). It is formulated that authority record, beside the authorized access point (authority headings), also contains variant access points – references from variant (non-preferential) to unique (preferential) determined form of authorized access point, references to related authorized access points, several types of notes and information on data sources.

The International Congress on National Bibliographies organized jointly by IFLA and UNESCO was held in 1977 and librarians from developed countries gave recommendations that “the national bibliographic agency should maintain an authority control system for national names, personal and corporate, and uniform titles, in accordance with international guidelines” (IFLA International office for UBC, 1979). The working groups that were formed on that occasion had specific tasks:

1. development of standards for data entry which resulted in manuals:
 - GARE – Guidelines for Authority and Reference Entries for printed and micro form in 1984;
 - GARR – Guidelines for Authority Records and References¹ for a much larger number of media in 2001;
2. development of UNIMARC format for authority files, which was realized through:
 - the formation of the Coordination Body in 1984, which included members of the IFLA Cataloguing Section;
 - the issuing of the first edition of UNIMARC/Authority Data in 1991;
3. development of methods for more efficient and successful exchange of authority data with end results:
 - linking all authority records;
 - availability of authority data of each national bibliographic agency on the Internet;
 - creating complex authority files as VIAF² and ISNI³.

2 Authority control principles in COBISS.SR system

Although the IFLA recommendations and instructions for the development of authority files were established in 1977 while the format UNIMARC/Authority data in 1991, in the Serbian library environment this

¹ GARR (Guidelines for Authority Records and References)

² VIAF (Virtual International Authority File)

³ ISNI (International Standard Name Identifier)

concept began to develop late, in January 2006 by establishing the basic principles of authority control, when at the initiative of the Virtual Library of Serbia (VBS), *Instructions for bibliographic records preparation regarding forming authority records for personal names – Uputstvo za pripremu bibliografskih zapisa za programsko kreiranje normativnih zapisa za lična imena* were made. Development authority file CONOR.SR project leaders were the National Library of Serbia, the Matica Srpska Library and the University Library "Svetozar Marković." The authority control project involved only those libraries which were part of the COBISS library information system,⁴ and the entire work was based on the continuous support of the Institute of Information Sciences (IZUM)⁵ from Maribor as an information service that deals with the maintenance and development of COBISS systems and services.

The first problems appeared when trying to determine the form of authorized access points, i.e. unique authority heading of the personal name as a starting point in work with authority files. The practice of creating authorized access points in catalogues, from card catalogues through electronic catalogues was different in different types of libraries in Serbia. National and public libraries in their author catalogues used the phonetic form of the author's personal name in Cyrillic script in the authorized access point. On the other hand, university, academic and other scientific libraries used the etymological, original, form of the author's personal name in Latin script in the author heading; or a transliterated, Latin form of the author's personal name which is originally written in Cyrillic script. At the meetings of the VBS Cataloguing Committee it wasn't possible to achieve a common approach or a concession from any side. The National Library of Serbia and the Matica Srpska Library could not accept the possibility that the determined form of personal name for foreign authors in the authorized access point should be in etymological form (Latin or Cyrillic script depending on the origin), and the University Library "Svetozar Marković" could not make concessions that the determined form of the personal name for Serbian authors should be in Cyrillic script, as a legitimate etymological form.

As a consequence, the Cataloguing Committee came to compromise solution to create parallel authorized access points in Cyrillic and Latin script in the authority record, which, proved by experience, was not a good solution.⁶ The UNIMARC format for authority data allows this possibility,

⁴ Hereinafter „COBISS.SR system“

⁵ IZUM (Institut informacijskih znanosti Univerze v Mariboru)

⁶ For more information, see the chapter The most frequently errors in CONOR.SR

since field 200 for the authorized access point is repeatable (IFLA, 2001, 69). The model of parallel authorized access points is also present in other data systems, but it is more often related to multilingual societies (e.g. the National Library and Archives of Canada use this model mainly in different bilingual etymological forms of corporate bodies in English and French). The possibility for this kind of authorized access point is also prescribed by the format for authority data COMARC/A (IZUM, 2020, 200-2) which is used in the COBISS system.

However, with this new approach in authority control in the COBISS.SR system, the previous regulations regarding phonetic or etymological authorized access point were abandoned, and parallel authorized access point in Cyrillic and Latin script as unique authorized access points for personal name were determined.

Inconsistency in the creation of parallel headings as authorized access points is reflected in following:

1. for Serbian authors, a pair of authorized access points for personal name consists of its Cyrillic and Latin form:
200 1 7cb – ćirilica – srpska aКараџић bВук Стефановић f1787-1864
200 1 7ba – latinica aKaradžić bVuk Stefanović f1787-1864
2. for foreign authors whose names are originally written in Latin, a pair of authorized access points for personal name consists of its phonetic Cyrillic and etymological Latin form:
200 1 7cb – ćirilica – srpska aИго bВиктор f1802-1885
200 1 7ba – latinica aHugo bVictor f1802-1885
3. for foreign authors whose names are originally written in Cyrillic, a pair of authorized access points for personal name consists of its etymological Cyrillic and transliterated Latin form:
200 1 7ca – ćirilica – nije specifikovana aГорький bМаксим f1868-1936
200 1 7ba – latinica aGor'kij bMaksim f1868-1936

Regardless of the inconsistencies, at the end of 2008, at the meeting of the VBS Cataloguing Committee, this decision was finally accepted by all members. Relatively soon achieved solution was incorporated in the Serbian Authority File, and the initial authority file CONOR.SR was formed (Савић, 2017, 103). Perhaps, one of the reasons for impulsive acceptance of this solution and starting on cataloguing with authority control is the desire of the Serbian library community to keep pace with the librarianship of developed countries, since the existence of authority file is a prerequisite for linking data from local and union catalogues in the Linked Open Data Cloud (Пуцаревић и Фурунџић, 2019, 116).

3 Creating CONOR.SR

The formation of the authority file CONOR.SR had several phases. First, in the period from 2008 to 2010, the chief cataloguers from the National Library of Serbia, the Matica Srpska Library and the University Library "Svetozar Marković" edited and marked appropriate bibliographic records for the initial authority file. By this action, they created the database (implemented in 2013) which consisted of about 54,000 bibliographic records that had necessary data for authors entered in fields 700 and 701 (surname, name, year of birth, as well as the researcher's code if it is assigned to the author).

Within the next phase the project had envisaged editing every record in the authority file, before connecting with bibliographic records which implies data checking, data adding and deleting duplicates. The data editing in the authority records is possible even after connecting with bibliographic records, but deleting duplicate records is not possible, because the bibliographic record would be left without heading i.e. authorized access points.

For that cause, a Chief redactor team of six members was formed, and it consisted of two redactors from every mentioned institution. The tasks of this team were to make a work plan, determine the principles of editing, divide the work and create instructions for editing the authority file CONOR.SR (Савић, 2017, 106). The plan consists of the following activities:

- the redactors of records created for Serbian authors are librarians from the National Library of Serbia and the Matica Srpska Library;
- the redactors of records created for members of national minorities are the librarians from the Matica Srpska Library;
- the redactors of the records created for Serbian researchers and foreign authors are the librarians from the University Library "Svetozar Marković".

However, although the *Instruction for Editing Initial CONOR.SR – Uputstvo za redigovanje pripremne baze CONOR.SR* was made and the number of redactors was increased from the initial 6 to 23, editing of all records was not completed until the installation of the COBISS software for authority control due to insufficiency of human resources in the mentioned institutions. Namely, for the authority file redactors, this is just one in a series of tasks they deal with on a daily base, so it was not possible to perform editing the whole corpus of records in initial CONOR.SR.

The Chief redactor team estimated that it should be switched to the cataloguing with authority control in the COBISS.SR system, although editing in the initial CONOR.SR was not finished. Primarily they had in mind huge period of time which has elapsed since tagging records (from 2008 to 2010) and their implementation in CONOR.SR database (2013), and finally the need to standardize cataloguing processes for libraries within the system. The team was coordinated by Milorad Vučković, head of the Center for Co-operative Cataloguing of the Republic of Serbia at the National Library of Serbia, and based on his enthusiasm and knowledge, and with the professional support of members of the Cataloguing Committee, a decision to switch to cataloguing with authority control was made in 2017.

In order to implement cataloguing with authority control, in 2018 it was necessary to educate about 850 librarians from Serbia (who at that time had a license for co-operative cataloguing in the COBISS system) to use the new software COBISS3/Cataloguing with authority control.

4 Education of librarians

The education of librarians for working with software and applications in the COBISS system is extremely centralized and is held in the National Library of Serbia for librarians from Serbia and its Province Kosovo and Metohija, while in the Matica Srpska Library in Novi Sad for librarians from the Province of Vojvodina. However, due to the large number of course participants and the short period of time a partially decentralized model was created at the insistence of Milorad Vučković, colleague who coordinated the entire project on behalf of VBS, with the support of Gordana Mazić, CONOR.SR contact person from IZUM.

Nine librarians, members of the Chief redactor team (two members from each institution and additional three members from the Center for Co-Operative Cataloguing of Republic of Serbia) acquired the permit (license) for holding the *Transition to COBISS3/Cataloguing with authority control* one-day course. That created the conditions for the education of librarians from academic libraries in Serbia by lecturers from the University Library “Svetozar Marković” in Belgrade.⁷

These one-day courses which provide license to create basic authority records were held in the period from June to December 2018 for 747 participants. The education was conducted in libraries throughout Serbia in order

⁷ The authors of this paper are lecturers on the course and members of the Chief Redactor Team for authority control.

to perform the job efficiently in a short period of time, and to reduce travel costs to a minimum. Lecturers from the University Library in Belgrade held courses in 14 terms for about 250 librarians from academic libraries in the University Library “Svetozar Marković” premises, but also in the University Library Kragujevac and the University Library “Nikola Tesla” in Niš for librarians from their branch libraries.

Librarians who successfully finished the course and gained the license to create basic authority records were given access to the CONOR.SR test authority file where they could check the acquired knowledge, determine what they have learned and face doubts, and also resolve them with lecturers. At the end of 2018, the most experienced librarians who successfully worked in CONOR.SR attended the course *Use of COBISS3/Cataloguing – Updating CONOR* and gained privileges for editing and updating those records.

Until April 2019, CONOR.SR had functioned as an independent database and the bibliographic records from the COBIB.SR database were not yet linked to the records from the CONOR.SR database. The records editing continued as a priority job for all redactors in every mentioned library. Special emphasis was placed on editing and deleting duplicates, while after connecting those two databases, that would no longer be possible. Librarians-redactors from the University Library “Svetozar Marković” focused on determination of duplicates for Serbian researchers as well as on standardization and editing of the records by consulting the database E-CRIS.SR⁸ and the websites of the institutions in which the researchers are employed.

Initial linking of authority records and bibliographic records in the COBISS.SR production databases is carried out in April 2019, when the CONOR.SR database was integrated into COBISS.

5 Quality control of authority records

As the CONOR.SR database is the same and unique for the entire COBISS.SR system (there are no local CONOR databases), the Joint VBS Commission for Cataloguing and Classification held a meeting in April 2019 to discuss the issue of editing new records created after linking the databases as well as the switching on cataloguing with authority control.

It was agreed that each of the three mentioned libraries should edit records created within their institution while also conducting the quality control of authority records created by librarians from their branch libraries.

⁸ E-CRIS.SR(Current Research Information System in Serbia)

Thus, the redactors from the University Library “Svetozar Marković” were given the task to check the quality of authority records created by librarians from academic libraries in Serbia.

Quality control of records is very important and necessary because, according to the data from the CONOR.SR database, only during May 2019, 11,729 records were created, and during 2019 a total of 73,456 records were created. During 2020, the database increased by another 48,687 records.⁹ Including the records from the initial authority file CONOR.SR, today we have about 170,000 records¹⁰ whilst the authority file is increasing every day. The editing of each individual record is too extensive, even an impossible task for redactors. Quality control is performed by reviewing the records of the individual creator and by identifying errors. The errors and deviations from the determined rules and instructions are pointed out to librarians by e-mail and consequently a correction of the record is requested according to the given recommendations.

Only two chief cataloguers from the University Library “Svetozar Marković” in Belgrade are conducting quality control of records in the entire network of 250 librarians from academic libraries from the area of central Serbia. Since the concept of decentralization is the only sustainable one in this situation, it was agreed that the university libraries in Kragujevac and Niš would delegate chief cataloguers for authority records created in their branch libraries. The model is already functioning successfully in the University Library of Kragujevac and will soon be established in the University Library in Niš.

6 The most frequent errors in CONOR.SR

A lot of time passed from the beginning of the education for working with the new concept of cataloguing with authority control in the form of a one-day course attended by the participants (June-December 2018) to the final connection of the bibliographic base and authority file in the COBISS.SR system (April 2019). Although the CONOR.SR test database had been formed after the given courses, only the most diligent and responsible librarians have been working in it. This is the main reason why numerous errors in authority data records occurred during the transition to the new way of cataloguing.

⁹ Given data on the 8th October 2020.

¹⁰ Given data on the 9th October 2020.

Several major problems and errors regarding work process were noticed during the examination of the authority records created by librarians employed in academic libraries.

The main problem is that librarians did not clearly understand how the system works. Namely, they often didn't understand that a bibliographic record is a record for a publication that is being catalogued, and that authority record is a record for a person who has a certain responsibility in that publication (e.g. an author in that publication, who may be an editor, translator etc. in another publication). Relying on traditional work and linear cataloguing, librarians often made the mistake of making a separate authority record for each responsibility that a person (entity) had.

Another problem is that librarians from academic libraries are used to forming a Latin etymological or transliterated authorized access point (authority headings) in their bibliographic records, so they often forget to enter a parallel form of authorized access point on Cyrillic script in field 200 of the CONOR.SR.

Also, in the bibliographic records created in academic libraries in the field 001\$7, the defined script of catalogue is ba-Latin script. So, it is a common mistake for librarians to form biographical details or activity notes about the entity in the field 340\$a and general cataloguer's note in 830\$a in Latin instead in Cyrillic script.

The next mistake is reflection of the superficial approach of librarians and their work by habit and automatism in the process of determining the authorized access point. For Serbian authors, a pair of authorized access points in fields 200 is consisted of parallel forms in Cyrillic and Latin script:

2001 7cb – ćirilica - srpska aЦрњански bМилош f1893-1977

2001 7ba – latinica aCrnjanski bMiloš f1893-1977

By the same principle, librarians make the mistake when forming the pairs of authorized access points for foreign authors which are originally written in Latin script:

2001 7cb – ćirilica - srpska aВажлд бОскар f1854-1900

2001 7ba – latinica aVajld bOskar f1854-1900

instead of properly formed pair of authorized access points:

2001 7cb – ćirilica - srpska aВажлд бОскар f1854-1900

2001 7ba – latinica aWilde бOscar f1854-1900

The biggest problem and the largest number of errors occurred in the process of creation pairs of authorized access points in field 200 for authors who are originally written in foreign Cyrillic scripts (Russian, Bulgarian, Northern Macedonian, Ukrainian, Belarusian, etc.). Following the rule that,

as in the previous examples, one form of name always appears in Serbian Cyrillic, librarians often make a mistake and form a pair of authorized access points in this way:

2001 7cb – ćirilica – srpska aДостојевски bФјодор Михајлович f1821-1881

2001 7ba – latinica aDostoevskij bFedor Mihaјlovič f1821-1881

instead of properly formed pair of authorized access points:

2001 7ca – ćirilica – nije specificovana aДостоевский bФедор Михайлович f1821-1881

2001 7ba – latinica aDostoevskij bFedor Mihaјlovič f1821-1881

Additionally, the redactors noticed that many librarians do not have the basic cataloguing knowledge, which is necessary when forming authorized access point, i.e. the unique forms of the personal name. In many cases, the correct form of the personal name could be made simply consulting the still valid cataloguing rules *Pravilnik i priručnik za izradbu abecednih kataloga* written by Eva Verona, which librarians did not take into consideration. On the one hand, the problem exists due to insufficient responsibility, knowledge and focus of librarians on the cataloguing process, while on the other hand, many libraries did not have the necessary cataloguing manuals and handbooks in their fund.

Based on the identified errors, it was also noticed that many academic librarians do not perform a detailed search of the electronic catalogue CO-BIB.SR and recommended databases VIAF and ISNI in order to determine proper form of personal name, year of birth and variant forms of a personal name. So, basically, here lies the main reason for creation duplicate records or records of insufficient quality.

The following remarks are sent by e-mail to only one cataloguer in the system. They are chosen because they illustrate the most frequent mistakes made by cataloguers in the process of creating authority data records. It is easy to conclude how extensive and demanding the work of authority record redactor is:

1. Enter the language code of entity in the field 101\$a.
2. Enter the code for nationality of entity in field 102\$a.
3. Enter the gender code of entity in the field 120\$a.
4. Enter the subject heading code in the field 106\$a; if the year of birth of entity is known, the code is 0; and, if not, the code is 1.
5. Enter the year of birth of entity in the field 190\$a, and the year of death in the field 191\$a, since you have already entered those years in the field 200\$f.

6. Resolve double-barrelled surname as a variant authorized access point in the field 400.
7. Always enter in Cyrillic script notes in the field 340\$a.
8. Enter notes about current job and entity position (director, manager, etc.) in the field 830\$a and also always use Cyrillic script.
9. The form of the note in the field 340\$a for university professors would be e.g. Professor at the Faculty of Law, University of Belgrade. If one entity is employed at several faculties, it is enough to enter the note Doctor of juridical science, university professor.

7 Improving the work of cataloguers

Since all redactors in the COBISS.SR system have similar problems when dealing with authority records, there was a need to set a meeting for members of the Chief redactor team for authority file and representatives from the Center for Co-Operative Cataloguing of the Republic of Serbia. The goal was to improve the work processes in the system and the quality of authority data records. The meeting was held in December 2019, and as a result of the agreement reached, instruction with examples for creating records in the CONOR.SR was made. Our colleagues from the Center for Co-Operative Cataloguing of the Republic of Serbia distributed the instructions to all librarians who have the privilege for creating basic authority records.¹¹

- Excerpt from the book *Правонис српског језика* by Mitar Pešikan, Jovan Jerković and Mate Pižurica published 2019, regarding transcription and phonetization of personal names on foreign languages;
- The book *A new transcription dictionary of English personal names – Нови транскрипциони речник енглеских личних имена* by Tvrtko Prčić published 1998;
- Few chapters of a book *Pravilnik i priručnik za izradbu abecednih kataloga. Dio 1, Odrednice i redalice* by Eva Verona published 1986, related to the creation of authorized access point (authority headings) and the transliteration of foreign Cyrillic alphabets.

The authority records editing and giving consultations by e-mail has been continued in order to improve the quality of records in the authority file. The mentioned model of decentralization of records editing seems to be

¹¹ Updates related with working process in authority file CONOR.SR could be found on web portal [Virtuelna biblioteka Srbije – edukacija](#).

the only possible and sustainable solution for the situation in which there are numerous cataloguers who create records and a small number of redactors who maintain the authority file CONOR.SR.

The decentralization would mean that each parent library in the CO-BISS.SR system should delegate one chief cataloguer who would edit the records created in libraries from their area (e.g. the Parent Library “Ljubomir Nenadović” in Valjevo would be responsible for authority records created in libraries of Kolubara District). In academic libraries, university libraries in Kragujevac and Niš would edit authority records created in libraries from their universities. The faculties that have several libraries in their organizational structure would also delegate one chief cataloguer for authority records (e.g. Faculty of Philosophy and Faculty of Philology, University of Belgrade). The University Library in Belgrade would continue its previous activities, and the National Library of Serbia and the Matica Srpska Library would perform a detailed editing of authority records created in their institutions.

8 Conclusion

The implementation and development of the authority file for personal names CONOR.SR is a huge step forward in the cataloguing process in the CO-BISS.SR system. The authority record for a concrete person (entity) is created only once, and then used whenever it is necessary to connect that entity with the appropriate bibliographic record, because the authority file is mutual for all libraries in the system. The CONOR.SR already contains over 173,000 records and continues to grow, while 785 librarians create new authority records on a daily base. This undoubtedly speeds up the process of working in the system of co-operative cataloguing. On the other hand, inconsistency in work, deficiency of handbooks in libraries, insufficiency of education and professional conscience of librarians lead to insufficient quality of authority records. The small number of CONOR.SR chief cataloguers cannot correct every incorrect record and mark every duplicate record in the system. The work is spontaneous to some extent, mistakes are corrected when they are accidentally noticed, but such a way of working is not sustainable.

The system solution for overcoming this problem requires a modification of working process and approach, starting from the level of knowledge required for passing the professional library exam, through giving and revoking licenses and privileges for co-operative cataloguing, to a decentralized approach in editing records in the authority file CONOR.SR.

The initial steps have been taken. Communication with librarians in the system is generally good, and workflow instructions and handbooks are provided to anyone who deals with authority records. This is the base for improving the quality of records that are going to be created in the future. We also have the opinion that a perfect system does not exist, but also its quality and functionality should not depend on enthusiasm of several individuals and on spontaneous approach. Therefore, we hope that communication and cooperation between the members of the Chief redactor team and the Center for Co-Operative Cataloguing of the Republic of Serbia will be even better, and implementation of the proposed solutions on decentralized record editing in CONOR.SR will be adopted, as logical, systematic and responsible solution for maintenance of the normative database in the best possible quality.

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