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# International Dateline — American University in Cairo (AUC), New Campus, New Library

by **Matthew Ismail** (Senior Instructor and Head of Collection Development, University Libraries and Learning Technologies, American University in Cairo, Egypt) <mdismail@aucegypt.edu>

American universities overseas are of two types. **Education City** in Doha, for instance, hosts branches of six American universities offering a limited academic program, such as Engineering at **Texas A&M-Qatar** or Business and Computer Science at **Carnegie Mellon-Qatar**, and students often complete the B.A. at the home university. On the other hand, there are institutions such as the **American University in Beirut** (1866) and the **American University in Cairo** (1919) which were founded by Americans overseas to offer an American style of English language education, but they award a complete liberal arts degree and are a part of the country and culture in which they are located.

The original downtown AUC campus was housed in the palace of **Ahmed Khayri Pasha** (later the Administration Building) on Tahrir Square, not far from the Egyptian Museum, the Kasr al-Nil Bridge, the Nile Corniche, and countless bookstores, coffeehouses, and restaurants. The eight acre campus, however, was scattered over several congested city blocks with limited laboratory and athletic facilities, and had clearly become inadequate.

The old **AUC Library** in downtown Cairo, for example, was a warehouse-like structure built in an unfortunate style known as The New Brutalism. It looked as if construction had been abandoned before completion and the cleaning staff had lost all interest in their occupation. The book stacks were full to capacity, there were only a few study rooms, and students had to make do with about 45 public computers, most of which were only for searching the OPAC. All of that would change with the move to the new campus.

The land for the new \$400-million, 260 acre AUC campus in New Cairo was purchased in 1997 and ground was first broken in 2003. When I arrived at AUC in August 2006, the project was behind schedule and continued disputes with the contractor had slowed work considerably. By the summer of 2008 the university faced a dilemma: the new campus would not be entirely complete by September, and the sub-prime crisis was also decimating the university's investments. Running two

campuses was too expensive, but the new campus alternative would no doubt cause problems: there were no phones or Internet in faculty offices, international students would be housed in substandard off-campus military hotels while the dormitories were completed, and science and engineering labs were incomplete.

Yet, the university moved anyway, and the initial settling-in period was quite tense. Not only was the campus incomplete, but many AUC employees, who had lived in downtown Cairo, Garden City or Zamalek for decades, were now commuting an hour or more one way in Cairo's brutal traffic.

The New Cairo campus is quite beautiful and interesting. The sandstone of which the buildings are constructed was quarried from one mountain in Kom Ombo, north of Aswan, which creates a sense of unity among different structures. The winding central avenue conforms to the original landscape and connects the entire campus, and one gains access to the various schools and departments through a series of gateways, courtyards and plazas, rather like medieval Cairo.

The university library has moved its roughly 350,000 volumes to the new campus with room to expand. The Libraries and Learning Technologies (LLT) building on the main plaza now includes not only the Main Library but the Rare Books and Special Collections Library, the Writing Center, Classroom Technologies and Media Services (which supports smart classrooms all over campus), University Academic Computing Technologies, and the Center for Learning and Teaching. The LLT was designed not just to house books and periodicals, but to provide a collaborative learning environment. There are nineteen group study rooms and a Learning Commons with over 200 PCs where individual students or groups can

search the OPAC, locate electronic books, journals or periodical articles, write a paper, create a PowerPoint presentation, or send email. Given that Egyptian society and AUC student learning styles were already extremely social and collaborative before col-



laboration became a pedagogical imperative, the library design could be called both socially and educationally appropriate.

As for my own area, as Head of Collection Development, the move to the new campus brought with it an opportunity for change. We began by reorganizing the liaison program. The Collections Committee had in the past simply allocated money to the departments and then relayed the book orders submitted by the faculty to Acquisitions. Librarians were not permitted to select books and new electronic resources were ordered mostly haphazardly. In our new approach, librarian and departmental faculty liaisons are both empowered to request books and the liaison process now centers on meetings in which librarians and departmental faculty discuss how best to spend the annual allocation.

AUC has also recently engaged **YBP Library Services** as our primary vendor. We integrated our collection development and acquisition practices by using **YBP's GOBI3** and the **Millennium** acquisitions module. Librarian liaisons now submit most book selections based on **GOBI Notifications**, and Acquisitions staff order books using early order confirmation records (EOCRs) instead of typing each record into a **Millennium** ordering template. We have thereby eliminated the piles of catalogs and printed pages that used to be the basis for selection and ordering. We also order the **YBP Core 1000** to bring some balance to a collection that has until this year been almost entirely built by faculty requests, most in their own areas of specialization.

Collection Development also changed its budget allocation process. Even though the university divides the library's materials budget by format (books, periodicals, electronic resources), we now subtract pre-committed funds for periodical or database subscriptions, the **Core 1000**, etc., and then make the remainder available to the departments according to a proportional formula. The librarians

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and departmental liaisons discuss how best to spend the allocations, with humanities and social science programs more interested in books, and programs in sciences, engineering, management and economics more interested in databases.

AUC has also established with YBP an automatic shipment program for Middle East Studies (MES) books. Because MES is very important to AUC and orders are submitted from many different departments, piles of publisher catalogs, promotional fliers, Amazon print-outs, and so on have always poured into

Acquisitions year-round from all over the university. This led to an enormous duplication of work as liaisons and Acquisitions received the same orders over and over again. Even with all of this duplicated effort, we did not always have a sufficiently comprehensive MES collection.

Our solution was to create an electronic slip Notification profile for MES in GOBI, then to chart the weekly results over the first few months. We then switched to



the automatic shipment option and adjusted the non-subject parameters as we analyzed the results in our electronic slips. The books for MES now arrive automatically, pre-processed, and ready to shelve, saving a huge amount of effort and assuring a more comprehensive collection.

These steps are modest enough, admittedly, but in the Middle East there are only a few institutions employing such methods, and most of them are American universities like AUC. 🌍

## Standards Column — Working to Solve the Problems of Name Authority — The International Standard Name Identifier and Other Projects

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Identifying the author of a text has been critical to efficient operation of a library for as long as there have been libraries. As the number of authors have grown over time, so too has the issue of keeping straight all of the authors and their works. Being able to explicitly and authoritatively identify all authors has been the holy grail of authority files since the advent of computer managed cataloging in the 1970s. The expansion of authority files from book authors to include authors of journal articles and other publications has compounded the problems, since book authors are only a relatively small component of the broader authoring community. In addition, the problems have continued to expand over time as non-English and increasingly non-western-language content grows in availability and interest within scholarship.

There are many issues with name identification. Within bibliographic records there is a core group of biographical information that helps to identify a single individual. These are most often, sex, dates of birth and death, nationality, occupation, and language. This complexity is compounded by corporate, fictional or non-human entities that are listed as authors.

There are many known problems with disambiguating content creators. A catalog record might have the same name but contain different biographical information about their life, which would lead to false negative connections between records. Another scenario is when two different people share the same name or share similar biographical information, which creates a false positive

connection between different people. Although less common, are situations where there are different persona but in fact are the same person, for example when people use pen names or change their names. This is most difficult in situations when the creator is actively interested in masking their identity for some reason. Finally in cleaning up systems, there are issues of ambiguity in matching, because of translations, combinations of missing or inaccurate data, or incomplete information.

Despite all of these challenges, many organizations and initiatives have over the years begun developing their own identification registries. Some of the earliest article repositories, such as **arXiv** and the **Research Papers in Economics (RePEc)** included author identification services. Commercially-run systems such as those supplied by **Elsevier (Scopus Author Identifier)** and **ThomsonReuters (ResearcherID)** also support name identification and associate services. **ProQuest** provides a different approach with **Scholar Universe**, that is compiled from lists of faculty members, their publicly available resumes and then associates the individuals with their published works. Each of these services provide “**Web 2.0**” interaction so that authors can correct or adjust their information.

In 2007, the **JISC Repositories and Preservation Program**, the **British Library** and **Mimas**, a data centre at the **University of Manchester**, began investigating: “...the potential for the development of a Name Authority Service and factual authority for digital repositories, to support cataloguing,

metadata creation and resource discovery in the repository environment (**JISC, 2007**).” The **Names Project**, as it is called, is developing a prototype for a name and factual authority service for use by UK repositories of research outputs.

The **International Federation of Library Association’s Functional Requirements for Authority Data: a Conceptual Model (FRAD)** outlines a series of entity descriptions compiled from **Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records (FRBR)**; and **Guidelines for Authority Records and References (GARR)**.

In identifying a person, **FRAD** outlines the following characteristics of a person: Dates, titles, designations, gender, place of birth/death, country, place of residence, affiliation, address, language, field, profession.

There are also issues with the relation to a name compared with a person, again from **FRAD**:

- real name
- pseudonym
- secular name
- name in religion
- official name
- earlier name
- later name
- alternative linguistic form
- other variant name

Within the question of rationalizing a system of classifying and uniquely identifying a person, there could be a variety of names that

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