

# **Eliminating Series Authority Records and Series Title Control: Improving Efficiency or Creating Waste? Or, 12 Reasons Why the Library of Congress Should Reconsider Its SARs Decision**

By

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The judgements made in this paper do not represent official views of the Library of Congress.

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## **Abstract**

The functions of series authority records (SARs) and the effects on LC's operations of the decision to end creation of SARs and series title control are discussed. The rationales for this decision—that keyword searching is adequate for series title access, that adverse impacts of the decision are mitigated by gains in processing time, and that access to the collection will be increased because more titles will be classified separately—are examined. The paper concludes that the negative impacts of ending the creation of series authority records and series title control at the Library of Congress indicate that LC's SARs decision should be reversed.

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On April 20, 2006, the Director for Acquisitions and Bibliographic Access announced that the Library of Congress would cease creating series authority records (SARs) as part of LC cataloging. The rationale for this decision claimed that "... indexing and key word access are more powerful and can provide adequate access via series statements provided only in the 490 field of the bibliographic record ..." and that "... adverse impacts ... are mitigated when the gains in processing times are considered." Further justifications for ending the creation of SARs included "... eliminates cost of constructing unique headings; [eliminates] searching to determine the existence of an SAR; [eliminates] creating SARs ..." and "... increases access because more titles will be classified separately." This decision went into effect on June 1, 2006.

What will the practical impacts of this decision be on library operations and the usefulness of the

catalog as a resource discovery tool for library customers? Will the elimination of SARs simplify or complicate LC's catalog and technical services processes? Will eliminating SARs result in greater efficiency in LC operations or cause confusion and time lost in unraveling uncertain bibliographic data?

The list of rationales provided by LC overlooks the fact that SARs perform several functions in addition to providing the authorized form of a series title. These additional functions include:

- recording alternative forms of the title (both authorized [earlier/later titles in 530 fields] and unauthorized forms [in 430 fields]);
- recording classification numbers for classed together materials (050 field);
- recording treatment decisions (analysis decisions in 644 fields);
- recording place of publication and publisher (643 field) to identify and differentiate the series title;
- recording collection decisions (discard or number of copies to be kept) and other miscellaneous data (667 field).

When a series is taken over by a new publisher or a series title changes (perhaps a corporate body begins to use its acronym instead of the spelled out form of its name in a series title) these changes are recorded in a SAR and assist catalogers to produce bibliographic records which enhance access for reference staff and library users. The series authority record supplies data which creates links to provide access to related items and helps build an organized catalog.

SARs contribute to the bibliographic control of intellectual and artistic works which appear in a series. Perhaps even more significant than the role they play in providing reliable access points to library customers, SARs serve important roles in the technical processing of items in libraries. The principles of bibliographic control which SARs serve also apply to electronic, "born digital" publications just as they do to print, microform, compact disk, vinyl disc, magnetic tape, or any other physical format on which information can be distributed.

### **Defining Monographic Series and Serials**

For the purposes of this discussion it will be useful to clarify the distinction between a monographic series and a non-analyzable serial. A monographic series is a gathering of monographs under a common series title whose volumes are generally issued with no particular regularity. Volumes in a monographic series are normally analyzed and classed separately since they are only generally related to each other and only loosely gathered under their series title. On some occasions volumes in a series may be focused narrowly enough that keeping the volumes classed together (and shelved together in a collection) is considered useful even though the volumes may be analyzed (have separate bibliographic records with unique subject headings).

A non-analyzable serial, by contrast, is composed of publications which are issued periodically and are dependent on their continuing overall title for their identity—the individual issues usually

do not have distinctive titles as monographs do. However, a non-analyzable serial can issue volumes with distinctive titles while retaining its identity as a serial. Many serial records include notes which state “Some issues also have thematic titles” or “Some issues have distinctive titles.” In these cases, although a volume of a serial may “look” like a monograph, the volume should not be analyzed. Analysis by catalogers does not increase access to these works, but actually creates disorder and confusion in accessioning and retrieving these materials (i.e., by creating expectations that other issues are treated similarly).

The elimination of SARs will cause confusion in processing materials that possess a combination of monographic and serial characteristics. The loss of the organizing functions of the SAR has significant deleterious consequences for the acquisitions, technical services, and reference functions of the Library of Congress.

### **Recommending, Acquisitions, Selection, and Collection Issues**

The identification of an item is essential in the recommending, check-in, and claiming operations of the acquisitions process. When a work is part of a monographic series the SAR performs an important role in establishing the item’s identity and where it “belongs” (in terms of chronological enumeration, classification, and physical placement). In complex monographic series titles (e.g., NATO science series), SARs record series/subseries information and communicate to staff performing check-in and claiming functions how volumes in the series have been designated or enumerated in the past. The SAR functions which establish a standard form of the series title and record variant titles assist staff in searching records, identifying items, and establishing which items are present and which are missing from the collections.

The NATO science series is a good example of the complexity of some of these circumstances. In the Library of Congress catalog, the NATO science series currently contains 16 subseries each of which are numbered with either arabic numerals, roman numerals or Latin alphabet characters (i.e., Series 1, Series I, or Series A). In addition to the subseries “numbering,” the subseries also possess titles (known in library parlance as “part titles”). Each item in the subseries has a volume number which designates the item’s numerical position in the subseries. The complete series/subseries designation of an individual item would be “NATO science series. Series C, Mathematical and physical sciences, v. 23.”

Sometimes a publisher will change the part title and/or the numerical designations for a subseries. What was once “NATO science series. General subseries F, Computer and systems sciences” will become “NATO science series. Series III, Computer and systems sciences.” The series authority records for the 16 subseries of the NATO science series contain 26 unauthorized alternative forms of title, 19 earlier/later authorized forms of title, 3 publishers (Kluwer, IOS Press, and Springer) and represent 494 individual volumes. An unauthorized alternative form of title is a form of the title that has been used on a publication at some time (perhaps a shortened version of the title on the spine or back cover) and is entered on the authority record as a cross reference. A SAR links the title changes together so that the progression of changes can be

tracked and understood.

The history of the NATO science series goes back several years and includes 3 series titles changes (NATO advanced study institutes series, NATO advanced science institutes series, and the NATO ASI series). In the LC catalog these 3 earlier series titles contain 20 subseries and involve 51 unauthorized alternative forms of title, 23 earlier/later authorized forms of title, 5 different publishers (Plenum, Reidel, Nijhoff, Kluwer, and Springer), and represent 2,118 individual volumes. The data provided in the SARs for these series and subseries titles can save acquisitions staff from duplicating research and wasting time on work that has been performed in the past.

Series authority records perform important functions in the acquisitions task of identifying items in the ordering and claiming operations. In the future, when recommending officers are researching items for ordering (to avoid ordering an item or series which the Library already possesses), or Library staff are conducting research to determine if LC has access to the items for which it has paid, these recommending and claiming tasks will become more complicated and time consuming without the identifying information provided by SARs and the controlled series titles contained in MARC 440 fields. Changes in electronic resources will take place over time and SARs will be needed for the bibliographic control of these resources just as SARs are needed to provide control for print and other physical objects in libraries.

A variety of practical collection decisions which provide valuable processing instructions can be conveniently recorded in SARs. The SAR for NREL/TP, the technical reports of the U.S. National Renewable Energy Laboratory (SAR no95016583), contains a 952 note which states “All NREL doc’s. on microfiche; LC should not keep printed copies.” Where will this collection decision/processing instruction be recorded if SARs are no longer created? Many NREL documents are now available as pdf files at the NREL website <http://www.nrel.gov/publications/> If the Library of Congress decides to stop collecting microfiche for NREL documents in favor of online access (or if NREL decides to stop issuing its documents in microfiche format), the SAR would be the place to record the format change and provide the url for access to NREL publications.

The recording of discard decisions for monographic series is another important function of SARs. In the area of medical sciences there are series which are considered too clinical for the Library of Congress to collect. LC focuses on the popular, patient oriented medical literature (not exclusively, but in general) while the National Library of Medicine (NLM) concentrates on the clinical literature. This is considered a logical collection development decision and an efficient means of dividing work between LC and NLM. “The Library defers to the National Library of Medicine in the area of clinical medicine and does not acquire the professional literature of clinical practice addressed primarily to professional practitioners” (LC Collections Policy Statements–Medicine <http://www.loc.gov/acq/devpol/medicine.html> ). On occasion whole monographic series are discarded at LC with the idea that the titles in the series will more logically fit in NLM’s collection (e.g., Advances in Pharmacology [LCCN 90660952, SAR

n96118568]). Without a SAR to communicate a previous collection decision for a monographic series, each volume will require individual assessment to determine a collection decision. This activity is an increase in the selection effort required in the processing workflow. The result of the absence of SARs will be to slow down rather than speed up the processing workflow and will inevitably result in the inconsistent treatment of volumes in the same monographic series. Consequences of this situation will include confusion for catalogers, reference staff, and library customers and a breakdown in collection policy which will cause volumes to be assigned to LC that should go NLM, and vice-versa. A similar circumstance exists with the National Agricultural Library (LC Collections Policy Statements–Agriculture <http://www.loc.gov/acq/devpol/agri.html> ).

### **Cataloging Issues**

In cataloging operations, the purpose of creating SARs is to efficiently perform various cataloging tasks and to enhance bibliographic access to library materials. When a treatment decision is made once and embodied in an authority record, then all subsequent decisions regarding similar items can be made without having to revisit the decision making process and conduct prolonged investigations into how a new item relates to items already in the collection. SARs are created to simplify and expedite processing, not to complicate the workflow.

Series authority records also contribute to the creation of a structurally sound catalog by helping to differentiate monographic series from non-analyzable serials. The loss of SARs will probably expand the cataloging workload by increasing the number of volumes of serials that will be erroneously analyzed and treated as monographs (because they “look” like monographs). The cataloging task will be further complicated by new procedures for catalogers regarding treatment of series statements appearing on resources (see: Transition Document for Implementing the Series Decision at LC in Cataloging Teams – issued by LC’s CPSO, May 31, 2006).

A search of series titles in the LC catalog which begin with the words “Advances in ...” retrieved 1176 records. A rough analysis showed that 103 of these series titles were collected together, 43 being “non-analyzed” (bibliographic records were not created for individual volumes–these are serial records) and 60 being “analyzed” (individual volumes had separate bibliographic records, but were still classed together). Volumes in the 60 series that had separate bibliographic records, but were classed together in the past, will now be classed separately under the new policy and scattered throughout the collection.

The policy of the Library of Congress is to continue to treat volumes of serials with distinctive titles as serials. However, when such a volume is erroneously passed into the monograph workflow for individual analysis, it will not be searched and rerouted to the serial workflow. Monograph catalogers have been specifically directed to refrain from searching series titles. The acquisitions staff will be relied upon to differentiate between volumes in monographic series and volumes of serials with distinctive titles—a task trained catalogers often found difficult even with the assistance of SARs. Since the decision went into effect, mistakenly analyzed serial records

have begun to appear (LCCN 2005922027 should be part of serial LCCN 98657360—this serial, Handbook of environmental chemistry, is an example of a publication with a complex series/subseries, part title, numbering, and “volumes with distinctive titles” situation which is going to be difficult to organize without SARs).

Will the 43 “Advances in ...” serial bibliographic records associated with the 43 SARs coded “do not analyze” be updated to reflect the fact that some volumes may be randomly analyzed and not recorded in the serial holdings? How will a searcher looking for a volume of a serial know when a volume of the serial has been analyzed and is not listed in the serial holdings? How many volumes in those 43 serials will appear with distinctive titles and be erroneously cataloged fully and classed separately? Add to these calculations all the volumes in series and serials with titles beginning with “Topics in ...” or “Current topics in ...” or “Methods of ...” or “Progress in ...” which would not have been analyzed in the past but will be analyzed under the new policy and the number of additional bibliographic records created each year will become significant. How many volumes added to the cataloging workload will the new policy cause? Will processing time be saved if a greater number of full bibliographic records are being created?

LC’s rationale claims that the adverse impacts of the cessation of SAR creation will be mitigated by gains in processing times. Does the cessation of the creation of SARs, however, save significant amounts of processing time sufficient to justify this action? Responding to this question requires a comparison between the value of the time required to create and maintain SARs and the inefficiencies created by the loss of SARs functions.

How much time is required to create a series authority record? There are several methods to create SARs at the Library of Congress. The Voyager cataloging module has an automatic authority record creation capability which creates an authority record for a heading by simply highlighting the “nonexistent” heading and pressing “enter” after the bibliographic record has been created. In a typical authority record some details are added after the initial automatic creation with a few keystrokes by the cataloger. Estimated average time expended for this process would be 2-3 minutes. Including the time required for examination of the item (locating the series title and its variant forms) and the cataloger’s thought processes and database searching, the total time for creation of a typical SAR could be estimated at 10-12 minutes. In a more complicated circumstance (where more details might need to be added to the SAR) the process would take longer—presumably the resulting record would have a corresponding higher value because it would be recording a greater volume of data or more complex data. A second method of SAR creation involves the use of templates which prompt the cataloger to input data with MARC field tags. This technique requires slightly more time since the cataloger is supplying each field (keying or inserting data by “cut and paste”).

But it must be remembered that a series authority record is not created for every bibliographic record processed. According to the figures provided in the ABA Director’s announcement of April 20, 2006, during fiscal year 2004 LC created 344,362 monograph records and 8,770 series authority records. This means that on average, a SAR is created for every 39 monograph records

processed (344,362 divided by 8,770). Granted, these figures only give the grossest image of the real cataloging picture. The ABA Director also reported that 82,447 monograph records contained series statements—so, about 1 in every 4 bibliographic records produced required a quick search (similar to a name search) by the cataloger for the SAR to ascertain the authorized form of the series title. Will saving the 10-12 minutes processing time for every 39 full bibliographic records processed plus the time to perform a series title search for every 4<sup>th</sup> bibliographic record processed be of greater value than the time and effort expended, confusion caused, and loss of access to library materials resulting from the elimination of SARs and the functions they perform?

The processing of technical report monographic series presents some unique circumstances. Technical reports can be treated as non-analyzable serials (e.g., NASA technical report, LCCN 63030755), but are more commonly processed as monographic series which can be classed separately or classed together (e.g., Technical report (California. Air Resources Board), SAR n88500223; Technical report (New Mexico. State Engineer Office), SAR n42031042). Since the title “technical report” is “generic,” virtually all authorized forms of series titles with the title “technical report” contain qualifiers. The use of qualifiers creates a unique form of the title which can then be used to search for that series. Often the qualifier is the organization publishing the document (e.g., Technical report (Mississippi. Dept. of Archives and History), SAR n86711448; Technical report (George Washington University. Human Resources Research Office), SAR n90713090). Without a series authority record establishing an authorized form of the series title it will not be possible to organize any series with a generic title (Technical report, Paper, Study, Bulletin) by its series title. How will a generic series title be transcribed? “Technical report?” “Paper?” Such titles transcribed in 490 fields are nearly useless in searching for volumes in a desired series.

In addition to providing series title control for generic series titles, SARs provide workflow instructions concerning how a technical report series is being handled (“Send unchecked to Science & Tech Div.”—SAR n42010084) or to indicate how a series should not be handled (“Not to be handled as a tech report”—SAR n86721468). A wide range of cataloging and treatment decisions can be communicated in SARs as mentioned earlier.

Another line of reasoning employed to support the demise of SARs states that “... searching to determine the existence of an SAR ...” will be eliminated. Searching is a necessary step in building a solid catalog that works to provide access to materials. The searching activity—whether it is for a duplicate bibliographic record, a previously established name authority record, a serial record, or a series authority record—is necessary in order to determine what already exists in the catalog and how the new item fits into the collection. What will happen to volumes of a serial whose issues may each appear with a distinctive title (and look like a book)? (e.g., IARC handbooks of cancer prevention [LCCN sn98039098, SAR no99075529] and Environmental health criteria [LCCN 87658166, SAR n42028282]). Without a SAR the likelihood increases that volumes in monographic series and serials will be cataloged inconsistently. The elimination of “searching to determine the existence of an SAR” is being

characterized as a beneficial time-saving measure when, in fact, searching is essential for the creation of an organized catalog and the loss of SARs and controlled series titles will contribute to a decline in the utility of LC's catalog.

It should be understood that what is being mandated in this decision is the elimination of cataloging techniques for handling materials which are part of a monographic series or a non-analyzable serial. This decision eliminates the classed together monograph series and also opens the door to the erroneous analysis of serial volumes with distinctive titles. The decision to stop creating SARs ignores a basic reality of cataloging that monographic series and non-analyzable serials are often difficult to differentiate and that passing along cataloging decisions and overviews of work previously performed through SARs increases cataloging efficiency and consistency.

In addition to eliminating the use of the MARC 440 field (controlled series title field), LC is discarding the use of the 490/8XX relationship in bibliographic records. MARC 490 and 8XX fields have been "paired" in bibliographic records to permit the transcribing (in a 490 field) of an unauthorized form of a series title which may have appeared on an item while the authorized form of the series title is also recorded (in an 8XX field). This method of ensuring that a bibliographic record is retrievable by a standard form of its series title is not possible without SARs. Series authority records and series title control result in higher quality bibliographic records and a more valuable catalog.

### **Reference and Retrieval Issues**

Promoting the notion that key word access is adequate for the retrieval of monographic series titles demonstrates a lack of understanding of the functions of series title fields (440, 490 and 830 fields in MARC records) and the SAR. A key word search for many series titles (especially those with common word titles such as "Papers" or "Research Report") is futile unless it is combined with other data. The only means of creating a standard form of a series title that can be used to retrieve all of the intended items, and only the intended items, through the series title field is the SAR. Without predictable, unique, and controlled terms occurring in the series title field, a key word search of the field will not succeed in retrieving records restricted to volumes in the desired series (e.g., Research report (Deutsches Forschungszentrum fur Kunstliche Intelligenz), SAR n97089310; Research report (European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions), SAR n86736891). Even small variations in series titles (plural vs. singular forms of words, American vs. British spellings of title words, use of an ampersand vs. the word "and") will thwart retrieval by series title field if a SAR is not used to establish a standard form of the title. Stable series titles that are unique will be able to be retrieved, but some confusion will result from the uncertainty of whether a search algorithm is examining the 440 field, the 490 field, the 830 field, or all three. The series title field in bibliographic records will no longer be reliable for the retrieval of all items in a series. Resource discovery via the series title field (e.g., find items similar to the known item through the series title) will be severely diminished. A basic question needs to be asked: Is the series title a valuable component

of information organization and does it provide a “portal” to resource discovery?

There is a type of serial (notably in science subject areas) which is made accessible to researchers through indexing and abstracting services, not library catalogs (eg., *Advances in molecular and cellular endocrinology* [LCCN 97642135, SAR n2005029866]). Although each of the volumes in such serials may possess a distinct title, the creation of bibliographic records for each of these volumes is a superfluous activity and may even be a disservice resulting in patrons and reference librarians being errantly led to inappropriate material. If the volume is a collection of research articles and is indexed by an indexing or abstracting service, the researcher interested in this material may consult the Library’s catalog to confirm that the serial is in the collection but will not necessarily be searching for records for individual, “analyzed” volumes. The establishment and maintenance of these serials requires SARs to record treatment decisions, call numbers, and retention decisions for the guidance of catalogers. A lack of consistency in these areas will directly undermine efficiency in reference and retrieval functions—as well as increase the time and effort expended in the cataloging operation.

When the distinction between monographic series volumes and volumes of serials with distinctive titles becomes blurred, the meaning of the data communicated in the bibliographic record becomes uncertain and locating items (whether digital or physical format) becomes more difficult for reference staff and library customers.

One of LC’s rationales states that access will be increased “... because more titles will be classified separately.” In reality the practice of separately classifying materials that should be collected together will result in related materials being dispersed and more difficult to retrieve (e.g., *Advances in cell aging and gerontology* [LCCN 97642097, SAR no99027692]). Series that could be advantageously classed together for retrieval or browsing purposes will end up being scattered across LC’s decks and shelves. When users request these items it will cause more Library resources to be expended in their retrieval than if the items had been classed together. These same retrieval problems will show up in all other research libraries that depend on the quality and consistency of LC’s cataloging work.

In a 1994 paper concerning treatment of conference proceedings (“Bibliographic Control of Conference Proceedings” in *Bibliographic Control of Conference Proceedings, Papers, and Conference Materials* [Chicago : ACRL, 1996]), Beacher Wiggins, Director of LC’s Acquisitions and Bibliographic Access Directorate, described a positive aspect of the serial treatment of meeting proceedings. He said, “Additionally, the very real benefit to be gained from having all the volumes shelve together is a decided advantage.” This advantage also exists for monograph series when the subject of the series is sufficiently narrowly focused. Incidentally, the volume in which this paper appeared was published in the ALCTS Papers on Library Technical Services and Collections series. If the reader is interested in discovering additional materials on related topics, please search a library catalog for this monographic series title.

The physical placement of materials in a reference collection is an important consideration for

efficiently accomplishing reference functions and for user access. Related materials need to be collocated so that sources which may contain similar information will be at hand when the answer to a specific question is being sought. Without a “classed together” cataloging option, volumes of serials with distinctive titles or monographic series advantageously classed together will not be collocated in either reference collections or in the general collection. Such “classed together” sets will no longer be possible without a SAR.

### **Functions of Series Authority Records and Series Title Control**

SARs and controlled series titles perform a number of unique roles which may seem insignificant as individual issues, but added together grow in importance. These functions include differentiating series with the same or similar titles, creating links between all titles created in a series by a single author, organizing subseries by use of the “n” and “p” subfields, and providing cross references to different language versions of a series.

#### **Differentiating Series With the Same or Similar Titles**

What happens in the cases of monographic series and serials which have the same or similar titles? (e.g., *Outre-mers* [LCCN 2001233054] and *Collection Outre-mers* [SAR no92021222]; *Situaciones* [SAR n84716484], *Coleccion Situaciones* [SAR n99045524], *Colectivo Situaciones* [SAR no2003001400], and *Situaciones (Merida, Venezuela)* [SAR n86714453]). In order to produce a bibliographic record which adequately describes an item, a cataloger must differentiate the series title, if any, to which that item belongs. This task requires establishing a unique form of the series title. How will this happen without SARs?

#### **Linking all Titles in a Series Created by a Single Author**

In cataloging children’s literature there has been a longstanding practice of creating series authority records under the author’s name if the author is considered the creator of the entire series (e.g., Marice Sendak’s *Little bear*: SAR n2001043529; Lola Schaefer’s *Animal kingdom*: SAR n2001002725; Tomie De Paolo’s *Kitten kids*: SAR n86702595). This practice provides efficient access (i.e., helps patrons discover resources) for parents and children to the works of favorite authors when that author has produced several works which have been given a series designation. *The Chronicles of Narnia*, a fantasy series composed of seven titles by C.S. Lewis, has 14 SARs under his name with qualifiers for publishers and 4 headings for translations of the series (Croatian, French, Spanish, and Russian). The series title heading is also used as a subject heading 54 times for works of criticism or reference about the *Chronicles of Narnia* (e.g., LCCNs 2006011657, 2005015101, 79016471, 86195732, 92046286, 78026476, 90004192).

A similar practice exists in LC’s general fiction and nonfiction collection. When an author is known as the creator of a monographic series, a SAR can be created under the author’s name to collect the series together (e.g., Alexander McCall Smith’s *No. 1 Ladies Detective Agency* series: SAR n2003028396, bibliographic record 2005052122; Mickey Spillane’s *Mike Hammer* mystery

thriller: SAR n86716205, bibliographic record 92035989; Georges Simenon's Mes dictees: SAR n42033220, bibliographic record 81199002). This practice can also be used when an author creates several works in a nonfiction monographic series (e.g., Paul Strathern's Great writers in 90 minutes series [SAR n2004028565, bibliographic record 2006019764]; Thomas Cahill's Hinges of History series [SAR n97110574, bibliographic record 2006044545]). With the elimination of SARs these practices cannot be continued at the Library of Congress.

### **Organizing Materials by Use of the 440 Field's "n" and "p" Subfields**

Many types of materials can be organized and later discovered through the use of the controlled series title field's (440) "n" and "p" subfields.

When supplements to non-analyzable serials are published and it is determined that it would be beneficial to provide analysis (i.e., a full bibliographic record) for the supplement, a "p" subfield can be used to create a standardized series title for the supplements. Generally, a SAR is created with the serial title as the 130 field and a "p" subfield with the designation "Supplement." The form of the serial title with the added subfield is then used as a series title in the bibliographic record (e.g., serial record for Research in accounting in emerging economies LCCN 96644676, supplement SAR no00092934, and bibliographic record for supplement analytic 2004617533; serial record for Word & world LCCN 81642132, supplement SAR n92091674, and bibliographic record for supplement analytic 94061151; serial record for Scandinavian journal of immunology LCCN 74642929, supplement SAR no2005111084, and bibliographic record for supplement analytic 2006273094). Without SARs this practice will no longer be possible.

The communication of the reading difficulty level of reading instruction materials is another function which can be performed by the "n" and "p" subfields. The subfields can record data which indicates the reading difficulty level of an item and the series title field can then be used to retrieve and display the titles in these categories. The All aboard reading series is a good example of this situation (SAR n91087571). This series includes 9 authorized series titles used in 170 bibliographic records for a wide range of reading skills such as "picture reader" (SAR n95120105), "pre-level 1" (SAR n2001155987), "level 1" (SAR n95057113), "level 2" (SAR n96051943), and "level 3" (SAR n96001334). The 490 "uncontrolled" series title field which LC catalogers will be using to replace the 440 field does not allow for the use of "n" and "p" subfields. Additional examples of this practice include: Step into reading (SAR n99256931–10 authorized series titles used in 555 bibliographic records), Really reading! books (n93021811), Passport to reading (SAR n2005050871), and Wonders of reading (SAR n00009263). At least one publisher is producing books with the same title at different reading levels and the only way to tell these items from one another (besides the ISBN) is the series title (Raintree freestyle [SAR n2004002633] and Freestyle express [SAR 2005068858]; bibliographic records for items with the title Incredible arachnids: LCCN 2005003624 and LCCN 2003019318).

Certainly reading level data can be supplied in a field other than the series title field in a bibliographic record. However, there is no other single field which can provide the search and

display capabilities of the series title field when combined with a controlled series title. With the discarding of SARs, the Library of Congress loses the possibility for the organization and discovery of reading instruction materials by reading level through the series title field.

### **Providing Cross References to Different Language Versions of the Same Series**

When a monographic series is issued in more than one language or is translated into another language the series authority record can be used to create a link between the various language versions of the series (e.g., Symbols of freedom and Simbolos de libertad: SARs n00013602 and n2002097992; Ooey-gooey animals and Animales resbalosos: SARs n2001007566 and n2001014801; First step nonfiction and Primeros pasos: SARs n00009024 and n2002154831; IARC scientific publications with a cross reference for an “unauthorized” form of title in French: n42013131). For Canadian government publications the relationship of English and French series titles is of special importance. The Research reports of the Canadian Transport Commission’s Research Branch (LCCN n42030364) has several “unauthorized” alternative forms of title (430 fields) including English and French versions. The language links provided by SARs for series that are issued in more than one language are important in locating documents produced by organizations which issue documents in more than one language—the European Union and the United Nations are examples of such organizations. With the elimination of SARs this opportunity for linkage and resource discovery among various language versions of a series will end.

Consider another example which illustrates the usefulness of the controlled series title field and SARs in relation to both the translation and the reading instruction materials issues. In July, 2003, a SAR for the Spanish translation of the “Step into reading. Step 1 book” series was created (Step into reading. Paso 1, Listo para leer, SAR n2003044947). This SAR provides a connection for library customers between the English and Spanish language “Step 1 book” level reading instruction materials produced in the Step into reading series. However, under LC’s new policy, the SARs for the Spanish translations of other reading levels will never be created. Records added to LC collections in this series will not be able to be retrieved or displayed through a series title search which includes the reading level data previously recorded in the “n” and “p” subfields.

### **The Examples of the Europäische Hochschulschriften series and the UNESCO Collection of Representative Works series**

The Europäische Hochschulschriften series (in English, European University Studies) provides another example of why controlled series titles are useful and necessary. First published in 1967 by Peter Lang, the European University Studies series (EUS) includes over 40 subseries and is used in nearly 15,000 bibliographic records in the LC catalog. The subseries titles are organized in a manner similar to the NATO Science series discussed earlier—the subseries designation includes an “n” subfield (Reihe I) and a “p” subfield (Deutsche Sprache und Literature).

The series title field and the series authority records perform several functions in organizing and enhancing access to the EUS series. The volumes in this series are scholarly works in the entire range of topics that are studied in universities. The subseries titles function to group the volumes together by subject are (e.g., Europäische Hochschulschriften. Reihe II, Rechtswissenschaft, SAR n42011187; Europäische Hochschulschriften. Reihe XX, Philosophie, SAR n42037709; Europäische Hochschulschriften. Reihe XXXVII, Architektur, SAR n83711378). Because the series is issued in three languages (German, French, and English), the controlled subseries titles—maintained through the SARs—provide cross references between the various language versions of the series titles.

The UNESCO Collected Representative Works series uses the “p” subfield to organize its volumes of works translated into English by language of origin (e.g., UNESCO collection of representative works. Chinese series, SAR n84705530; UNESCO collection of representative works. Norwegian series, SAR n86812320; UNESCO collection of representative works. Arabic series, SAR n42025576). This monographic series has 26 authorized subseries titles utilized in over 300 bibliographic records. Its French counterpart, Collection UNESCO d’œuvres représentatives (SAR n42034389), is used in 18 authorized subseries titles which are utilized in 88 bibliographic records representing works translated into French.

Without SARs and series title control the organization, retrieval, and opportunities for resource discovery by library customers of volumes in these monographic series and other series similar to these will be critically impaired.

### **Eliminating SARs: Improving Efficiency or Creating Waste?**

Series authority records and their attendant procedures have been developed by librarians to provide cataloging techniques and methods which would enhance access to materials in library collections. Is series title control and the series authority record useful for the organization of information and resource discovery? Does the elimination of SARs bring us closer to fulfilling the mission of the Library or lead us away from our objectives?

The American Library Association Code of Ethics states that, “We provide the highest level of service to all library users through appropriate and usefully organized resources ... .” When the Library of Congress decides to practice “service shedding” (see: LC Inspector General Karl Schornagel’s “Preliminary Survey of the Cataloging Process,” Audit No. 2005-PA-103, May 3, 2005) on the creation of series authority records are we “...better aligning [our] cataloging products with the needs and demands of a changing world and society” as IG Schornagel contends or are we discarding a useful tool for the organization and accession of resources? The services which are “shed” at the Library of Congress will need to be performed by library staffs across the country if these professional activities are to be provided to the US public.

In a response to an internet petition objecting to the SARs decision signed by about 3500 library

workers from around the world, Associate Librarian for Library Services Deanna Marcum stated, “Big changes are on the way. The series authority records are but the first step in refocusing the Library of Congress to take advantage of the promises of technology, to focus on actual needs of information seekers, and to build a 21<sup>st</sup> century library that is as effective in the digital age as the traditional library has been in the world of print.” Is eliminating a controlled access point in bibliographic records an example of taking advantage of the promises of technology? The methods and techniques used to gain bibliographic control over print and other physical formats are not obsolete because these physical formats continue to be produced in large numbers and sought by library customers. It should also be considered that the methods and techniques used to achieve bibliographic control over objects in physical formats—such as the series title—may have a role in establishing control over objects in digitized formats.

During a July 27, 2006 hearing before the House of Representatives Committee on Administration, Congressman Vernon Ehlers asked Associate Librarian Deanna Marcum to describe the function of series authority records and justify their proposed elimination. Marcum stated in part of her reply, “...we looked at the series authority records that are used by very, very few people ... the series authorities let people know how a series title has changed over time. All of the use information that we could gather indicated that about one half of one percent of the use of online catalogs is for that part of the record. So we decided that we could stop managing that part and focus on some of these new digital requirements.” (See the webcast at: <http://cha.house.gov/hearings/hearing.aspx?NewsID=1370> [Minutes 44:00-49:00])

While it may be argued that series title searches are not performed as frequently as author, title, subject, or keyword searches might be, a series title is a vital clue to locating an item in some circumstances and can be a significant route for resource discovery. The relevant question seems to be: will the benefits of ending the creation of SARs outweigh the negative impacts of essentially giving up the controlled series title field? Will ending the creation of SARs actually free up resources to “... focus on some of these new digital requirements”?

Perhaps another solution to the “processing of paper objects versus the processing of digital objects” dilemma could be found if the national library community was approached with the problem and asked to participate in the development of a response to our circumstances? Could the Program for Cooperative Cataloging (PCC) be expanded to include a “distributed” cataloging function so that items possessed jointly by LC and other US libraries could be processed outside the Library of Congress as a normal part of the LC workflow? Could a closer, more collegial work environment be developed between catalogers and cataloging operations around the country (i.e., a more robust PCC) which might produce more and better bibliographic access to everyone’s collections? In the “Age of Google” and the great advantages of our technology and the internet, could a broader sharing of language, subject, and cataloging expertise be devised which would spread benefits without greater costs and shouldn’t the Library of Congress be at the center of such developments (instead of whittling away at LC cataloging operations)?

Projections for the book industry do not indicate major decreases in the production of print

materials; that alone indicates this is the wrong time to begin eliminating mechanisms to describe and access print materials. Please view the presentation by Albert Greco and Robert Wharton entitled “Recent and Predicted Book Industry Trends” given on May 19, 2006, at the Library of Congress. Webcast: [http://www.loc.gov/today/cyberlc/feature\\_wdesc.php?rec=3891](http://www.loc.gov/today/cyberlc/feature_wdesc.php?rec=3891)

At an LC staff-only event on June 7, 2006, Ben Bunnell, Google’s Library Partnership Manager, asserted that “Google relies on good cataloging.” Apparently Google’s proprietary search algorithm is not simply a keyword “count and retrieve” program, but searches metadata to provide increased relevancy to its search results. Should LC begin to downgrade the metadata it provides as search algorithms are becoming increasingly sophisticated in order to utilize such metadata? If taking advantage of new technology is in the interests of the Library, it would seem that providing bibliographic records with robust descriptions (including controlled series titles) for search algorithms to manipulate would be an activity LC should pursue, not shy away from.

The Library of Congress mission statement says, “The Library’s mission is to make its resources available and useful to the Congress and the American people and to sustain and preserve a universal collection of knowledge and creativity for future generations.”

Does eliminating the creation of SARs and giving up series title control improve the availability of LC’s resources or does this decision destroy efficient tools that help provide access to a common characteristic of published intellectual and artistic works—the series title? The negative impacts of this action indicate that the LC SARs decision should be reversed.

## **12 Reasons Why the Library of Congress Should Reconsider Its SARs Decision**

To summarize, here are 12 reasons why the Library of Congress should reconsider its SARs decision.

1. Stopping the creation of SARs undermines the organization of materials published in a monographic series (whether those items are physical or digital in format) and severely diminishes the series title as a means of resource discovery for library customers. Without SARs and series title control there will be no way to differentiate series having similar titles and the series title will become unreliable as a means of identifying and accessing materials in the Library’s collections. The principle that items published in a monographic series should be organized together by means of a series title field in their bibliographic records should not be abandoned. First, because print and other physical objects are still being produced and continue to utilize series titles as an organizing mechanism. Second, because this principle can be applied to e-resources which are published in a series.

2. The assumed gain in processing time, which is a large part of the justification for the elimination of the creation of SARs, will probably not materialize because catalogers spend only a small portion of their time on series title work (Assumptions: SARs creation is about 10-15 minutes every 40<sup>th</sup> bibliographic record created and series title searching is about 3-5 minutes

every 4<sup>th</sup> bibliographic record created). Additionally, if LC expands the portion of its cataloging which is produced using Minimum Level Cataloging (MLC) or Copy Cataloging, time savings resulting from ending SARs creation will diminish. MLC (no LC classification or application of LC Subject Headings) and Copy Cataloging do not require series authority work. If more LC cataloging is performed under these guidelines, there is less time saved by cutting full cataloging procedures because less work is executed as “full level” cataloging.

3. Without SARs it will not be possible to establish series titles under personal names so that a series created by a single author can be identified with its creator. This is a practice used in juvenile works, fiction, and nonfiction series when a single author has created all the items in a series.

4. The functions that SARs perform for acquisitions and selection activities will no longer be available and these activities will become more complicated, less accurate, and more time-consuming as a result. The impact on recommending, check-in, and claiming tasks will hurt library operations. Without SARs collection decisions which apply to entire series will not be able to be recorded and applied. This will result in an increase in selection processing activities since each volume in a series will need to be examined to determine whether it will be added to LC’s collection instead of using a SAR to record the selection decision for the entire series.

5. The linkage which series authority records provide between items published in series in different languages will be lost. In a time when communication and understanding between cultures using different languages is so great, this may be a larger price to pay than many realize. Dr. Billington has written about this being “... a time when America’s pressing economic and security concerns depend increasingly on better knowledge and understanding of the world” (Introduction to LC’s 2004-2008 Strategic Plan, p. 8 <http://www.loc.gov/about/history/pdfs/04-08StrategicPlan8-14.pdf>). This decision works against the effort to improve communication between cultures using different languages.

6. The new cataloging policies which require catalogers to transcribe series titles in a 490 field (an “uncontrolled” series title field) without creating SARs will result in a confusing tangle of contradictory records in the Library’s catalog. Aberrant records will mislead and frustrate reference staff, library customers, and LC catalog users around the world. Volumes of serials with distinctive titles will be added to the database as monographs and not added to the serials holdings—a serious disservice to both library customers and other librarians. Not only are catalogers being prevented from using their professional skills to create series authority records, they are being required to essentially disregard decades worth of work that exists in previously created SARs. Congress might be interested to learn that systems which have been created at great expense to taxpayers are being “discarded,” especially when these systems and operations provide service to thousands of their constituents’ public and academic libraries. The services “shed” by LC will have to be performed by librarians across the country if those services are to be provided to the US public.

7. Ending the creation of SARs eliminates the possibility of “classed together monographs” which is a useful cataloging method for keeping closely related monographs together and enhancing access for reference staff and library users to these materials. Ending a practice which is beneficial to staff and customers does not promote the mission of the Library.
8. All meaningful access through the series title field to items in monograph series with generic titles (e.g., Technical report, Paper, Study, Bulletin) will be lost. A series title search of the catalog will no longer be able to reliably produce a list of the volumes of the desired series that are present in the Library because the principle of series title control has been abandoned. With the use of qualifiers even generic titles can be made unique so that they can be searched effectively—without SARs this is not possible.
9. The organizing capabilities of the “n” and “p” subfields of the 440/8XX fields are lost when controlled series title fields are no longer used. The “uncontrolled” series title field (490) which the LC SARs decision uses to replace the controlled series field (440) does not allow the use of the “n” and “p” subfields. The series title field (440) can be used to search for and display reading instruction materials according to reading level difficulty through the use of the “n” and “p” subfields. Without controlled series title fields in bibliographic records it will not be possible for the Library of Congress to provide access to reading instruction materials which includes the reading difficulty level in the series title field. The “n” and “p” subfields can also organize materials by topic (see the Europäische Hochschulschriften example) or, in the case of translations, the original language (see the UNESCO collection of representative works example).
10. The benefits of controlled series access points and authorities outweigh the cost of their creation. This is the rationale given by Library and Archives Canada (LAC) in their statement about SARs which was distributed on the Technical Services Interest Group discussion list <http://library.queensu.ca/cts/tsig/tsig-TSIG-L.htm> and the Canadian Libraries discussion list. LAC stated, “Although LAC supports the goal of more cost-effective cataloguing and is undertaking its own review of policies, LAC has decided not to follow LC’s recent decision to cease the creation of series authority records. The results of a costing analysis and consultation with the Canadian library community and with the public service areas of LAC indicate that the benefits of controlled series access points and authorities outweigh the cost of their creation.”
11. The cessation of the use of controlled series title fields by the Library of Congress essentially represents a “downsizing” or decrease in the access points provided in the bibliographic records LC creates. F.W. Lancaster in Indexing and Abstracting in Theory and Practice (p. 253, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. London : Facet Pub., 2003) states, “One major factor influencing the performance of information retrieval systems is the number of access points provided.” Does it make sense to decrease the number of access points in LC bibliographic records when search algorithms are being refined to take advantage of detailed metadata?
12. The loss of series authority records will cause volumes to be misdirected and mis-assigned

among the Library of Congress, the National Library of Medicine, and the National Agricultural Library. Collection decisions--recorded in SARs--that are now consistent and routine will become erratic and unpredictable, resulting in greater acquisitions costs and decreases in service quality in the US national libraries.

### **Appendix: Reactions to the Library of Congress SARs Decision**

Librarians around the world have reacted to the LC SARs decision. Here are some links to a variety of responses and discussions of the topic. All urls in this paper worked as of January 10, 2007.

Africana Librarians Council Letter  
[No url currently available]

ALCTS Issues Statements on the Library of Congress Series Authority Record Decision  
<http://www.ala.org/ala/alcts/alctspubs/alctsnewsletter/vol17no3/17n3nf/17n3LCseries/17n3LCseries.htm>

American Association of Law Libraries  
See: SLA/AALL Letter on LC's SARs Decision

American Library Association reaction reported at libraryjournal.com  
<http://www.libraryjournal.com/article/CA6335807.html>

ARL letter supporting LC's decision to stop creating SARs and end series title control  
See: University of Missouri's "Treatment of Bibliographic Series" webpage

Art Libraries Society of North America, Cataloging Advisory Committee  
<http://lsv.uky.edu/scripts/wa.exe?A2=ind0605&L=arlis-l&T=0&F=&S=&P=21359>

Association of Jewish Libraries  
[No url currently available]

David Bade's Letter on LC's decision concerning series authority records, etc.  
[http://library.music.indiana.edu/tech\\_s/mla/Bade\\_letter\\_May\\_06\\_.htm](http://library.music.indiana.edu/tech_s/mla/Bade_letter_May_06_.htm)

Jim Casey's notes on ALA Annual 2006 (scroll down to: "Forum on LC Series Authority Decision")

<http://libraryjuicepress.com/blog/?p=86>

Library and Archives Canada decision reported in Library Journal

<http://www.libraryjournal.com/clear/CA6374271.html?nid=2673#news2>

Music Library Association

[http://www.musiclibraryassoc.org/pdf/newspostings/LC\\_SeriesResponse.pdf](http://www.musiclibraryassoc.org/pdf/newspostings/LC_SeriesResponse.pdf)

National Library of New Zealand to Continue Its SARs Policy

<http://tepuna.natlib.govt.nz/cgi-bin/prtool/dump2?itemid=1156993434>

OCLC's Response to the Library of Congress Decision (June 21, 2006)

<http://www.OCLC.org/news/announcements/announcement191.htm>

Petition to Prevent LC From Abandoning the Creation of Series Authority Records

<http://www.petitiononline.com/MARC830/petition.html>

SLA/AALL Letter on LC's SARs Decision

<http://www.sla.org/pdfs/advocacy/052606LibofCongLetter.pdf#search=%22series%20authority%20decision%20library%20congress%22>

UCLA Catalogers Group outline of their discussion on series authority

<http://www.library.ucla.edu/libraries/cataloging/catgroup/catgroup060420.pdf>

University of Missouri–Columbia "Treatment of Bibliographic Series: Coping with Library of Congress Policy Changes" webpage

<http://mulibraries.missouri.edu/TechSvc/catalog/catpro-seriesChanges.htm>