Doc. 6A3: Managed Growth – SACO

The SACO program received increased management attention within the Library of Congress. A commissioned study from a contractor suggested several improvements which sped up the handling of subject proposals within the LC's Cooperative Cataloging Team. The chief innovation was making available to the general library world Web forms for new subject proposals that had previously been reserved to BIBCO libraries. A web form for proposing changes to existing headings was also developed. Use of these interactive forms by an institution allows a proposal to be downloaded in most cases into the LC local database and further reviewed electronically, eliminating delays and errors in re-keying paper submissions.

The use of the web form is a stop-gap measure at best as there are several major contributors that continue to resist using the web form because of the lack of a "save" function that would allow internal review of proposals. The change proposal form has proven to be problematic and continues to require re-keying. Neither begins to approach the ease of contribution facilitated by the NACO contribution/distribution mechanism in place between the utilities, the BL, and LC. The Study did not address the procedures for classification.

The question for the PoCo is Recommendation no. 6 from the Study [Executive summary attached] which asks that the PCC formalize SACO as a component of the PCC with all the attendant membership benefits and training support.

Note: In FY02 SACO members contributed 3,165 headings to LCSH; LC catalogers contributed   .

**The Subject Authority Cooperative Program: Review and Recommendations
(extracted from a report written by Charles Fenly, presented to RCCD July 2002)**

1. Executive Summary

The operations of the Subject Authority Cooperative Program (SACO) component of the Program for Cooperative Cataloging were studied to determine if recommendations for improved quality and efficiency could be made. The report's recommendations include, among others, revisions in workflow, a reduced level of review of subject proposals, a concentration of Coop Team resources on the larger-producing SACO participants, an increased level of LC cataloger support for the SACO process, introduction of the concept of SACO independence, and certain policy changes.

2. Summary of Recommendations

This report offers the following recommendations. Each recommendation is presented in full in the text together with supporting discussion. The recommendation numbers in this list correspond to the recommendation numbers in the text.

1. Revise the workflow to make more extensive and efficient use of the web form technique of proposal submission. [**COOP—Done**]
2. Review subject proposals less extensively at the SACO cooperative cataloger review stage. [**Coop –Ongoing**]
3. Formulate and apply consistently policies related to feedback, guidance, and revision of participants' work. [**Coop –Ongoing**]
4. Apply Coop Team resources to work directly only with major contributors and promote the organization of funnel projects for institutions submitting few proposals. [**Coop –Ongoing**]
5. Involve LC cataloging staff with subject expertise more extensively in the SACO process. [**Coop –Ongoing**]
6. **Re-define SACO as an institution-based program with membership criteria**. [**PoCo –For discussion**]
7. Institute a process whereby a meaningful level of independence from review would be possible for SACO participants. [**Coop/CPSO –To do**]
8. Develop a SACO Subject Proposal Basic Training course. [**SCT/CPSO/Coop –To do**]

3. Background

The Subject Authority Cooperative Program (SACO) is the component of the Program for Cooperative Cataloging (PCC) that was established to enable program participants to propose new subject headings and classification numbers (and proposed changes) directly to the Library of Congress, thereby contributing to the development of LCSH and LC classification. SACO has expanded along with the rest of the PCC, with

an increase in the number of participants and approved subject headings submitted from 18 participants and 678 headings in 1992 to100 participants and 2,631 headings in 2001.

Despite the evidence of success implied by the increase in participation and contribution of headings, there is a perception on the part of the staff of Library of Congress units responsible for handling SACO work that improvements in the efficiency with which the submissions are processed and improvements in the overall quality of submissions are desirable. Accordingly, the investigator was charged to study the SACO process with the objective of identifying opportunities for improvements in efficiency and quality. The specific charge was as follows:

"The [investigator] shall provide recommendations for a streamlined workflow for processing proposals which can be readily implemented in Coop and the Cataloging Policy and Support Office. Provide recommendations for training SACO participants that would enable them to submit well-formed, properly researched proposals to the Library of Congress Subject Headings with minimum review on the part of the Cooperative Cataloging Team."

Classification proposals are not explicitly addressed in this report, since the investigator was advised that these are rarely problematic. Several of the recommendations could nevertheless be applied to this aspect of SACO work if this were considered desirable.

4. Methodology

The investigator utilized the following methodology to collect data about the functioning of the SACO program:

1. Interviews with and observations of the SACO cooperative catalogers and the acting Coop Team leader who process submissions from SACO participants. These interviews and observations were focused on ascertaining specific details of how subject heading proposals are submitted and what steps are taken within SACO to prepare these submissions for the next stage in the workflow; identifying those issues relating to the submissions deemed by SACO staff to be problematic (e.g., common errors); and eliciting from SACO staff their personal ideas for improvements to the program, both from the efficiency and quality standpoints;
2. Interviews with the team leader of the Subject Heading Editorial Team (SHED) of the Cataloging Policy and Support Office (CPSO) aimed at ascertaining specific details of the workflow for subject proposals within that unit. Of particular interest were any processing steps duplicating steps already carried out by SACO staff.   Ideas for program improvements based on the SHED perspective were also sought;
3. Interviews with the subject specialists of CPSO responsible for making the final determination as to the acceptability of SACO participant proposals. Of particular interest within this group was their view as to the quality of SACO proposals at

the point of receipt within CPSO and their particular perspectives as to potential program improvements.

4. Review of pertinent documentation, such as statistical reports, the *SACO Participants' Manual*, materials posted at the PCC and SACO websites, and other materials.

5. Recommendations

Recommendation Number 1:

a. The web form should become the predominant means for submission of new subject proposals (changes, because they apply to already existing LC subject authority records, are not included in this recommendation). Implementation of Recommendations 4 and 7 would help insure that better proposals appear in LC Local upon initial import.

In order to mitigate the impediment to maximum efficiency under this proposed workflow represented by the current arrangement for deleting subject authority records, SACO cooperative catalogers should be authorized to delete SACO-generated subject authority records that reside only in LC Local in those cases where the proposals are found to be deficient such that they should be referred back to the originating SACO liaison.

Recommendation Number 2:

SACO cooperative catalogers should simplify their review process. For libraries under review the following review steps should be sufficient:

1. Insure that the new heading is needed (i.e., not covered by an existing heading or *heading—free floating subdivision*, etc.) and that the 1XX field is not a duplicate;
2. Insure that there are additional 670 (or 675) citations beyond the "work cat." where required;
3. Insure that the UF's are supported by 670 information;
4. Insure that a BT is present if required;
5. Insure that a pattern or SCM memo is cited where required;
6. Insure that required data elements generally are present;
7. Identify the bibliographic records that need to be changed

For libraries that have achieved SACO independence, SACO cooperative catalogers should complete the following review steps only:
1. Insure that the 1XX field is not a duplicate;
2. Look over the proposal to insure that there are no obvious errors or missing data elements;
3. Identify the LC bibliographic records that need to be changed.

The acting Coop Team leader suggested that the concept of independence be carried even further, so that proposals submitted by libraries that had achieved SACO independence would go directly to SHED and bypass SACO cooperative cataloger review. The investigator believes that this approach should be explored if the general concept of independence is accepted. One of the questions it raises is the issue of the means whereby bibliographic file maintenance related to subject proposals would be achieved.

It is assumed, based on discussions with the SHED team leader, that SHED will continue to search and review according to their current practices. As an ongoing contribution to quality control and assurance, SHED should provide feedback to the SACO cooperative cataloger in cases where proposals contain significant errors.

Recommendation Number 3:

Given their heavy workload, the SACO cooperative catalogers should make an investment in feedback and mentoring only for those institutions that contribute a sufficient number of proposals such that they can be expected to develop and maintain a basic level of skill. It is not an effective use of time to provide an explanation of a policy or procedural point to an institution whose next proposal may not appear for weeks or even months. (This problem will be mitigated if Recommendation Number 4 of this report having to do with funnel projects is implemented.)

 The Coop Team should formulate a policy regarding how much consultation is appropriate at each stage of the process and apply the policy consistently. The team should also formulate a consistent policy regarding the extent to which a cooperative cataloger will revise a deficient proposal rather than returning it to the submitting institution. The investigator recommends that proposals be referred back to the originator in most instances where changes are required, unless the changes are very minor ones and not typical of that institution. Returning the deficient proposals helps educate the submitter and saves the time of the cooperative cataloger in cases where research or other time-consuming steps might be needed to enable the proposal to advance to the subject editorial process.

However, as noted in Recommendation Number 1, referral of web form submissions back to their originators is done most efficiently if the SACO cooperative catalogers can delete the subject authority records that require re-submission.

With respect to time-consuming inquiries from SACO participants concerning the status of their proposals, the investigator believes that implementation of the other recommendations in this report will improve proposal throughput time. If this proves to be the case, participants should be more willing to depend on the weekly tentative and approved lists of subject proposals for information regarding proposal status.

Recommendation Number 4:

LC staff should provide in-depth basic training in the subject proposal process and mentoring and consultation services only to designated representatives of institutions committing to submit at least 20 proposals per year. (The workshops in subject analysis and advanced subject topics such as those taught at ALA are a contribution by LC as the national library to cataloging excellence generally and should not be regarded as primarily supportive of the SACO process.) [**Note: the author is mistaken; the SACO workshops were instituted as a vehicle for SACO participation. The workshops are named SACO Workshops and were developed with PCC participants (especially BIBCO) mind**]

Libraries who wish to submit the occasional proposal should submit the proposal not directly to the Coop Team but rather to a designated funnel coordinator. The coordinator would be a trained and experienced individual with a demonstrated ability to prepare accurate and intellectually and technically sufficient proposals. The coordinator would assist the occasional submitter with technical problems, insure that the proposal was in good order, and submit the proposal to Coop via the web form to enable the most expeditious processing.

The Coop Team should develop a list of possible candidates to serve as funnel coordinators and actively solicit the participation of these individuals to function in this capacity. The funnel coordinators should be provided the full complement of SACO training (if they have not had it) and mentoring and consultation support from a SACO cooperative cataloger.

Recommendation Number 5:

Working with the Director for Cataloging and the Cataloging Management Team, seek to establish the principle of ongoing support for the SACO endeavor. Establish a program of rotating details of subject cataloging experts to function as SACO cooperative catalogers. By preference, seek volunteers for these details, selling the concept as a means of demonstrating skills and abilities supportive of the GS-13 level of the cataloger career ladder.

If a sufficient number of funnel coordinators cannot be developed outside LC, consider employing LC subject experts in this function. Establish a group of subject experts in particular subject areas to whom especially complex or unusual proposals can be referred routinely for review and who are willing to process these quickly.

Recommendation Number 6:

Establish SACO as an institution-based program. Establish a minimum level of participation (for example, at least 20 proposals per year) in order for an institution to be a full participant working directly with the Coop Team and eligible for SACO Subject

Proposal Basic Training. Encourage other institutions to participate as "associate" SACO members contributing their proposals to and working directly with a funnel coordinator.

The labor-intensiveness of the SACO process at present to some extent reflects the policies underlying SACO. The SACO literature frankly presents the program as being "everyman's" PCC program. For example, the SACO FAQ starts out with the following:

Q: Who can join SACO?

A: It is highly recommended that catalogers consult with their supervisors before beginning to send forward subject or classification proposals to SACO; however, at this time SACO participation is not an institution-based program. Any individual cataloger at any institution who needs a subject heading or LC classification number not available in LCSH or in the LC schedules may send forward a proposal to SACO. …

The *SACO Participants' Manual* states that SACO " … is the only component of the Program for Cooperative Cataloging that is open to any library that wishes to participate. There are no formal training requirements and SACO participants need not belong to a bibliographic utility nor even catalog in an online environment in order to submit subject heading and classification proposals."

These policies do not support the need to focus the limited resources available to the SACO program on those institutions willing and able to make a commitment to develop and maintain a high level of skill in the challenging work of preparing excellent subject proposals.

Recommendation Number 7:

Establish a process whereby full SACO participants (institutions and funnels contributing, for example, 20 or more proposals per year) could be objectively evaluated for a greater level of independence from SACO cooperative cataloger review. Institute a simple checklist for tracking corrections made to proposals at any review stage by these participants. Periodically compare the information on corrections thus obtained with the number of proposals submitted. Once an institution demonstrated its ability to produce high-quality work over time, declare that institution independent for purposes of SACO cooperative cataloger review and reduce the level of review to that specified in Recommendation Number 2 above. If ongoing review showed that a participant was not progressing toward independence, embark upon a remediation program for that participant focused on the specific problems brought to light by the review process. Some realistic flexibility would be in order with respect to independence. For example, a participant might succeed in submitting correct proposals in most but not all disciplines. They might therefore be declared independent in their strong areas but expect to receive more assistance from their SACO cooperative cataloger when they needed headings outside those areas.

A notable difference between NACO and SACO is that NACO libraries are expected to become independent of review, while SACO participants are never independent. The investigator believes that a distinction should be made between the larger and smaller contributors, with only the larger contributors (including funnels) being eligible for independence. To determine whether independence is merited, some data must be collected, but this need not be an excessively burdensome process, and it should be time-limited, with the expected payoff for the effort involved being less review of a particular institution's submissions on an ongoing basis.

When there is a perception of less-than-perfect quality in a work process, additional training is invariably proposed as a solution to the perceived problem. As noted above, SACO participants are not required to have training. This is quite different from NACO, with its five-day basic training course. Though there are doubtless many excellent subject catalogers in the library community outside the Library of Congress. Excellence in assignment of LC subject headings and classification numbers does not equate to excellence in proposing new subject headings and changes to existing headings according the rigorous (and rigid) LC system. Training is in order for all serious participants in SACO.

Recommendation Number 8:

Develop a SACO Subject Proposal Basic Training course. In developing this course, draw upon existing resources to the greatest extent possible (for example, the *SACO Participants' Manual* and materials prepared by the SACO cooperative catalogers and CPSO subject specialists for previous training activities). Insure that the SACO liaison for each full SACO participant library and each funnel coordinator has had this course (or its equivalent in terms of previous courses which have been offered). Offer this course only to representatives of institutions expected to be full participants or funnel coordinators. Continue to offer advanced subject skills workshops open to librarians more generally.

Draft: SACO Program Parameters/Benefits

1. Required documentation
   a. Access to current copy of LCSH (via OCLC, RLG, LC web authorities)
   b. Subscription to Subject Cataloging Manual (SCM).
      i. Price: currently $200 (No. Amer. including updates) $340 (outside No. Amer. including updates)

2. Required training: Attend a 3-5 day training workshop to be presented by LC trainer or PCC regional trainer.
   a. Syllabus to include:
      i. Overview of analysis and assignment of headings (a departure from NACO training—where knowledge of cataloging is assumed) and identifying the need for subject development.
      ii. MARC 21 content designation for subject proposals/authorities.
      iii. Step-by-Step procedures for submitting SACO proposal form (including: cross references, 670 requirements, scope notes, etc.)
      iv. Formulation of headings at least 3 areas (with option to customize based on specific institutional needs, e.g., Art; Religion; Scientific names):
         1. Geographic entities
         2. Named events
         3. Language and literature
         4. Optional: LC Classification

      v. Administrative section to include mechanism for review and independence parameters

3. Required contribution goals: prospective members agree to contribute a minimum of 20 new or changed proposals per annum.
   a. Divide institutions into small and large and apply same criteria (proposed) as with NACO libraries.
   b. Include administrative overhead such as application for membership, letter of commitment, etc. to mirror (proposed) NACO requirements.

Questions:
Would subscriptions to the SCM be subsidized by PCC to mirror the NACO Program?
Who would pay for Subject training workshops (institution, PCC, or a combination?)
If classification included as an optional component what support would be available to facilitate contributions?
What to do with current contributors; apply requirements retrospectively; grandfather-in; what about international partners?
Amend PCC governance document to include changes in SACO program.

Benefits of belonging to SACO:
Better subject access to materials in local collections
More specificity in assignment of headings
More cost-efficient mechanism for providing training to all catalogers
Access to expert advice and knowledge of subject areas outside normal scope
Assured acceptance of subject proposals for inclusion in LCSH
Broadening the scope of LCSH to reflect international needs
Representation on the PCC Policy Committee
Right to vote for representative to PCC Policy Committee