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Cataloging II

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There's No One Like Moses: Some Problems with Authority Headings in Non-roman Scripts

Many libraries contain materials written in a variety of languages, many of which use different alphabets or ideographs. Until comparatively recently, the average OPAC was not able to display characters other than the Latin alphabet, and such capabilities were only available starting in the early 80s with the ability to display Hebrew script in ALEPH, the Israeli research library network.¹ Beginning in 1991, RLIN was able to display a variety of scripts.² Now the Unicode standard (<http://www.unicode.org/>) makes it possible for all systems easily to display characters from non-roman scripts in catalog records. Ironically, this does not represent much of a leap forward in catalog records—it just brings the OPAC up to date with the card catalog. On old catalog cards, one can find type in Russian, Greek, and Hebrew just to start. As long as the typewriter (or cataloger) could produce the script, the card could accurately reflect the script on the item.

But merely representing the script on an item is not enough. One of the functions of a catalog is to collocate all the materials by an author or corporate body, and this becomes trickier than usual with names written in non-roman scripts. How should one represent a name in roman script? In the English speaking world we have generally agreed on how to represent such names,

¹ Susan Lazinger and Judith Levi “Multiple Non-Roman Scripts in ALEPH--Israel's Research Library Network,” *Library Hi Tech* 14, no. 1 (1996): 111.

² Joan Aliprand, “Scripts, Languages, and Authority Control,” *Library Resources & Technical Services* 49, no. 4 (2005): 243.

but now that the technological capability for displaying non-roman scripts is widely available, the question of how and when to implement those capabilities arises. As Joan Aliprand puts it, “Use of Unicode does *not* provide answers to the most challenging questions related to authority control, languages, and scripts.”³ To get a sense of some possible answers, I would like to examine where we have been in creating authority files for authors whose names appear originally in non-roman scripts, and think about where we might go in the near future. One example in particular will illustrate some of the conundrums inherent in this problem.

A Man Of Many Names

Enter Maimonides (1135 or 8-1204). He was a physician, theologian, and philosopher who was born in twelfth century Spain. As Jews under the intolerant rule of the Muslim Almohads, his family fled Spain and lived in Morocco and Palestine before finally settling in Egypt. He finished his most famous work, *Guide for the Perplexed* in 1190. He wrote it originally in Arabic, though he wrote the majority of his works in Hebrew. The name by which he is best known now is Moses Maimonides, which is the Greek version of his Hebrew name Moses ben Maimon—meaning Moses, son of Maimon. He is also known by his Arabic name Abu Imram Musa ibn Maymun ibn Ubayd Allah, and as Rambam, an abbreviated Hebrew form of Rabbi Moses ben Maimon used in his work on the Oral Torah.⁴ The Latin version of his name appears as Mosis Majemonidis or Mosis Maimonidae in some old editions of his works edited by European scholars.

This is just the beginning of the many identities of this man. An old saying about Maimonides goes like this: from Moses to Moses, there was none like Moses. This refers to the

³ Ibid., 244.

⁴ See Maimonides, *Encyclopedia of World Biography*, 2nd ed. 17 Vols. Gale Research, 1998. Reproduced in *Biography Resource Center*. Farmington Hills, Mich.: Thomson Gale. 2007. <http://galenet.galegroup.com.proxy2.library.uiuc.edu/servlet/BioRC>.

biblical Moses as well as Maimonides, and implies that the latter might have been better. He was incredibly influential to not only Jewish thought, but Muslim thought as well.⁵ Because he wrote in several languages on subjects pertinent to many people in many lands, he has picked up a variety of names throughout the years. The Library of Congress authority file on him contains 23 cross-references to names in several languages, including all the many ways of translating and interpreting his Hebrew and Arabic names. The heading that LC has established for him is Maimonides, Moses, 1135-1204. This follows AACR2 rule 22.3C1, which tells us that in establishing headings for persons entered under given name written in a non-roman script that we should “[c]hoose the form of the name that has become well-established in English-language reference sources... If variant English-language forms are found, choose the form that occurs most frequently.” Thanks first to Galen, and later to medieval European scholars who discovered the work of Maimonides, the most common form of his name known to the English speaking world is neither of the names he was known by in life, but rather the romanization of a Greek translation. How does one go about cataloging a name so international in scope?

Anglo-American Answers

Anthony Panizzi’s answer to this problem appears in number 5 of his 91 rules on cataloging works in the library of the British Museum, which later became the basis for the British Library Association’s cataloging code. “Works of Jewish Rabbis before 1700, as well as Oriental writers in general, to be entered under their first name.”⁶ This statement is somewhat puzzling, and certainly anachronistic, but it does provide a solution of sorts. Maimonides appears under his Hebrew name of Moses ben Maimon in the Catalogue of the Hebrew Books in the

⁵ For more on this, see Joseph Telushkin’s entry on Maimonides/Rambam in *Jewish Literacy*, (New York: William Morrow and Co.), 1991.

⁶ Anthony Panizzi, “Rules for the Compilation of the Catalogue,” *Catalogue of Printed Books in the British Museum*, 1 (1841).

Library of the British Museum, published in 1867.⁷ Of the tens of pages of authors entered under the name Moses, many might have made more sense and been simpler entered under surname. Book titles appear in Hebrew letters, which takes away any ambiguity about how they are to be transliterated and therefore, understood. Yet herein lies a question: if all these authors had Hebrew names and wrote in Hebrew, why not put the whole thing in Hebrew? Why anglicize any names when presumably those who are consulting the catalog are proficient enough in Hebrew to understand the names as well?

The first Anglo-American cooperation in cataloging rules appeared in 1908 with *Catalog Rules, Author and Title Entries*. Here is a new take on form of Hebrew names: “Hebrew writers prior to the 19th century, unless decidedly better known under a European form of name, are to be entered under the given name of the author followed by that of his father or by some designation referring to the city of his birth or residence, or to his profession, or to his rank.”⁸ And with more specific reference to Maimonides’ situation: “A Hebrew writer who has written in both Hebrew and Arabic is to be entered under his Hebrew designation with reference from the Arabic name.”⁹ They then give the example of main entry under Maimonides, with references from Rambam and Moses ben Maimon. Another rule listed for both Hebrew and Arabic writers is to transcribe the definite article *ha* in Hebrew and *al* in Arabic, but not the count it for filing purposes. This is still an issue to consider with Unicode. Disagreements may exist between cataloging agencies on how to interpret words in English, and the problem multiplies when we consider a non-roman script. Some names may in fact be more appropriately filed under the definite article. For instance, Arabic cataloging agencies consider the definite

⁷ Joseph Zedner, *Catalogue of the Hebrew books in the library of the British Museum*, (London: British Museum), 1867.

⁸ J. C. M. Hanson, *Catalog rules; author and title entries*, (Chicago: American Library Association), 1908: 15.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 15.

article *Al-* as part of the name.¹⁰ Thus this rule, based on English language practice, is inappropriate for actual speakers of the language.

In the AACR of 1967, there was no specific rule governing rabbis or other “oriental” writers, but rather a rule on names in non-roman alphabets, and discussion of what choices would make sense.¹¹ As above, by the time of AACR2 (2005 update), the suggestion was to use the form most commonly found in English language reference sources. Moses ben Maimon, of many places and tongues is now Maimonides, Moses, 1135-1204, though his dates are subject to scholarly and cataloging arguments.¹²

The problem with cataloging anything in a language other than English, and in particular when transliteration is required, is standardizing all the instances of a name or phrase in a way that will be useful to users of the catalog. Both Hebrew and Arabic have diacritics and vowels that affect their romanization¹³. As with any language, this requires the cataloger both to know the language in question well enough to transcribe the words correctly. Standardization is even more important for authority records, particularly in the realm of cooperative cataloging. With differing levels in technology and ability to view non-roman scripts, it becomes advantageous to use the lowest common denominator of scripts, e.g. the Latin alphabet. The Library of Congress name and subject authority files continue to use Latin scripts due to the differing abilities of library systems to display non-roman scripts.¹⁴ However, due to advances in technology this is less the case. Joan Aliprand describes the issue in the context of RLIN’s authority records which could not contain non-roman script data because “all parties working with synchronized

¹⁰ Iman Khairy, “Authority Control of Arabic Personal Names from the Classical Period at the Bibliotheca Alexandrina,” *International Cataloguing and Bibliographic Control* 35. no. 2 (2006): 37.

¹¹ Donald Lehnus, *A Comparison of Panizzi's 91 Rules and the AACR of 1967*, (Urbana, IL: Graduate School of Library and Information Science), 1972: 5.

¹² “Re: Fw: [PCCLIST] Proposal to allow the addition of dates to established personal name headings,” <http://www.mail-archive.com/heb-naco@lists.acs.ohio-state.edu/msg00559.html>, last accessed April 25, 2007.

¹³ For Arabic, see Kamel, Eltalmas, and Abubaker, 24. For Hebrew, see Lazinger and Levi, 112.

¹⁴ Aliprand, 247.

authority files have to be able to see authority records in their entirety, including data in non-Roman scripts... with the increasing use of Unicode in library systems... the library community [is] achieving this capability.”¹⁵. The essential problem in authority work is that “each source of authority has an explicit or implied language,” and so it is impossible to authorize headings in multiple languages with multiple sources of authority in one record. MARC21 and UNIMARC both provide ways of linking records or displaying alternative scripts, but both of these have their drawbacks.¹⁶ The option which Aliprand endorses is to link “authorized headings naming the same entitle in different languages or vocabularies” using the Virtual Authority file model, which links heading using the 7XX fields.¹⁷

Some International Solutions

As above, Israeli libraries began developing systems for displaying Hebrew and cooperative cataloging in the early 80s, and later developed systems which could display Arabic, Cyrillic and Greek alphabets. Since Hebrew is the national language of Israel, it was necessary to develop a system that could display bibliographic records in Hebrew. Many libraries also have many Cyrillic and Arabic materials, and so the system had to encompass those as well.¹⁸ For American libraries, however, this does not provide a solution to the problem of authority files, since they have English as a primary language.

More specialized libraries with a trained cataloging staff can and do develop individual policies regarding headings for their system. In an old, but still interesting and relevant paper, Clifford Miller, now a senior cataloger with the library of the Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS) describes some internal cataloging policies at JTS. In an attempt to get cataloging done as

¹⁵ Ibid., 243.

¹⁶ Ibid., 246.

¹⁷ Ibid., 248.

¹⁸ Lazinger and Levi, 112.

quickly as possible but still up to rigorous profession standards, they often modified RLIN records, though this varied between catalogers. Their internal policy allowed modification for various reasons, including when a record contained a character their system could not display; errors in spelling, punctuation, and Hebrew grammar; theological objections to headings based in Christianity; or author headings and uniform titles that differed from an already established local heading.¹⁹ For example, their policy was not to automatically enter Hebrew authors under surname. In addition, while their main headings were in roman form, these had “*see* references from the Yiddish and/or Hebrew forms in both the original script and Romanization...”²⁰ He describes a number of situations in which their internal policies or background knowledge about a name differed from RLIN and LC, and their general approaches as an individual agency. Unicode will only help when an agency determines to do this additional work, but it will do nothing for those agencies that do not have time or resources for it.

Since Arabic is the official or a common language in many more countries than is Hebrew, it is equally important to have good access to Arabic materials. Several papers have been published on this topic in recent years as more Arabic speaking countries are interested in participating in cooperative cataloging. As librarians from Zayed University in the United Arab Emirates put it, “[i]n the middle East, the absence of a single Arabic authority file with high cataloging standards resulted in a catastrophic situation...libraries in the Middle East struggled individually with establishing name and title authority records.”²¹ This all changed with Unicode, which finally made it possible to have a consistent representation of the Arabic alphabet and therefore uniform authority files. They prefer the MARC21 model, which has the established

¹⁹C.B. Miller, “Anomalies in RLIN Hebraica records. Reflections of a recent arrival on the cataloging scene,” *Judaica Librarianship* 8, no. 1/2 (1993): 40.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 43.

²¹ Ibrahim Kamel, Alaa Eltalmas, and Muneer Abubaker, “On Searching Arabic Records in Electronic Libraries,” *International Cataloguing and Bibliographic Control* 34, no. 2 (2005): 23.

form of the heading in Arabic script, with the Latin form in a linking 7XX field.²² They recognize, however, that due to a long lack of authority control and cooperative cataloging, that this system will be difficult to implement.

Iman Khairy of the Bibliotheca Alexandrina describes how authority control work looks at that institution in an effort to bring about more uniform standards and establish an Arabic equivalent to NACO. As he puts it, "...there are various reference sources and methodologies used for authorizing old Arabic names...these differences in recording the same name may stand as a barrier to cooperation regarding an Arabic script union catalogue and authority file."²³ In particular, authorizing names for old Arabic authors (those who were active before the 20th century) requires distinguishing between the four or five elements that make up an Arabic name and choosing the entry element.²⁴ The Bibliotheca Alexandrina uses the *Maaq* as their main authority, an abbreviation of the title of a work, which translates as "Entries of old Arabic names." When that fails, they have set list of works to consult for different cases, which ensures uniformity of records.²⁵ If more institutions can agree on certain standards for Arabic cataloging, it will facilitate copy cataloging and other cooperative cataloging efforts in regions where Arabic is the primary spoken language.

Another example of Arabic cataloging in a multi-lingual environment is at the International Islamic University in Malaysia, where instruction occurs in both Arabic and English. They provide name headings in Arabic when the item itself is in either Arabic or Arabic/English, and in some cases provide a transliteration as well. They provide headings in

²² Ibid., 24.

²³ Khairy, 36.

²⁴ Ibid., 36-37.

²⁵ Ibid., 37.

English for items written in English, and provide no access in Arabic to these items.²⁶ Staff at that institution expressed the feeling that there is a definite need for more standards in the Arabic cataloging world, echoing other recent work on that area. They also agreed that while bilingual cataloging is in general much more difficult than monolingual cataloging, in the end it is much more useful for their local population who know Arabic and English and seeking materials in both languages.²⁷ The students of the university generally agreed that the catalog was helpful, but found it difficult to switch between searching in the two languages, and suggested that the OPAC needed improvements to make this easier.²⁸

Conclusion: No One Answer

What emerges from all this is that cataloging in non-roman scripts on an international basis is still developing. Even with the use of Unicode, it is still difficult to agree internationally on how to represent names in non-roman scripts. The examples of the individual libraries and library systems cataloging materials in Hebrew and Arabic share a common theme of adapting international and inappropriate standards to fit local needs. All these institutions, particularly in Arabic speaking countries, also recognize the necessity of making cooperative cataloging viable to assist scholarship and international cooperation. Since most OPACs are publicly accessible from anywhere in the world via the internet, it means that catalogers also need to be aware of virtual international visitors who are looking for what materials are available. For instance, the JTS library catalog is fully searchable in English and Hebrew, and in general, all users of the catalog will be at least somewhat proficient in both languages. Thus, they can make their catalog searchable in Hebrew and English and still make it useful to international visitors. On the other

²⁶ Kaba Abdoulaye, "Perceptions of cataloguers and end users towards bilingual authority files," *Electronic Library* 20, no. 3 (2002): 205.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 207.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 208.

hand, the Hebrew University online catalog (<http://jnul.huji.ac.il/eng/aleph500>) must go to extra efforts to be accessible to international visitors who may only know English. Trying a few searches for Maimonides in this catalog will show that authorities in non-roman scripts are far from perfect. Searching online catalogs remotely is difficult; most users will not set their system to work with another script automatically, but rather they must change settings to use all the features of the catalog.

We have focused on the Semitic languages of Arabic and Hebrew, but the problem becomes more difficult if we consider Asian languages, in particular the different forms of Chinese used in China, Hong Kong and Taiwan.²⁹ The problem is, on the other hand, less difficult with languages such as Russian and Greek, while in a different script, have easy and somewhat standard transliterations into English. That is not to say, however, that libraries in Greece and Russian speaking countries are not facing similar problems as they automate their research libraries.³⁰

With Unicode, most institutions participating in cooperative cataloging will be able to implement more non-roman scripts with less difficulty. However, this may or may not be useful to an institution where the majority of language users will have less familiarity with foreign languages. One solution might lie in dividing the work by area of expertise. As various cataloging agencies around the world continue to develop software and standards to improve cataloging, each cataloging agency could govern materials in that language or region. One possible problem with this is the political fracas which would undoubtedly arise. Another idea, and one with vocal supporters, would be to scrap the idea of authorized headings based on the

²⁹ Aliprand, 244.

³⁰ For a description of the situation in Greek academic libraries prior to Unicode, see Michael Kreyche, "Library Automation in Greece: A Visitor's Perspective," in *Academic Libraries in Greece*, (New York: Haworth), 1993.

physical card catalog model. We will most likely not see this in RDA, but it is something that will need to happen at some point.

In the end, however, the problem comes down to making users comfortable searching for materials. For now, catalogers will have to be aware of their users and with which language the majority of them are most comfortable. And Moses ben Maimon/ Abu Imram Musa ibn Maymun ibn Ubayd Allah/Maimonides/ may have to get an even longer and more complicated authority file in order to cover all the possibilities.

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