Chapter 1

“MY ZINE LIFE IS MY PRIVATE LIFE”: REFRAMING AUTHORITY CONTROL FROM DETECTIVE WORK TO AN ETHICS OF CARE

Violet Fox and Kelly Swickard

Introduction

The essence of authority control is authoritatively correlating people with the works they create—but what happens when people don’t want to be paired with their work? Contemporary artists and authors who create controversial or private artwork and literature have concerns around controlling their identity which may change over time and require thoughtful policies which give them as much autonomy as possible. The authors of this chapter have experience cataloging resources that illuminate privacy challenges in name authority work: protest art, artists’ books, and zines. The Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA)’s Decker Library is an example of a small art and design college library which provides many opportunities to reflect on ethical name authority issues.

Kelly Swickard is a librarian with master’s degrees in library science as well as archaeology and art history. Her career began with working at the archive of a female artist, where she learned to respect even a deceased artist’s wishes for privacy. Swickard now works as the Resource Description Librarian at Decker Library, where she curates the zine and artists’ books collections. Violet Fox is a NACO-trained metadata librarian

who has a long history in zine librarianship, particularly focusing on the intricacies of zine cataloging. She is also one of the administrators for critlib Twitter chats, a community of library workers who are dedicated to bringing social justice principles into library work.

Collection Development

Collection practices of libraries and archives change over time, as ideas for what is important to include in cultural institutions shift. At MICA, previous library administrations considered graffiti and street art to be vandalism, but cultural recognition has shifted enough that the current administration is open to viewing street art as a form of protest art. Decker Library acquisitions have followed the changes in the college's focus from fine art to design, illustration, and practical art.

Alternative press materials such as zines have slowly gained purchase in library and archival collections as a relatively inexpensive way to document contemporary culture from more diverse viewpoints than traditionally published works.¹ Decker Library began acquiring zines in 2012, with collection policy focused on work created by students and alumni, created by and/or about people of color and or/or members of the LGBTQ+ community, and zines focusing on activism.²

Artists' books have a longer history of being accepted within library collections, especially at institutions with strong arts programs; Decker's artists' books collection supports MICA's active book arts program.³ At Decker, artists' books were collected as part of student courses or events in the mid- to later part of the 20th century, however it was not until the

1. David Tkach and Carolyn Hank, "Before Blogs, There Were Zines: Berman, Danky, and the Political Case for Zine Collecting in North American Academic Libraries." *Serials Review* 40 (1) (2014): 12-20, doi: 10.1080/00987913.2014.891866.

2. "Decker Library Zine Collection Policy," Accessed June 7, 2018, https://docs.google.com/document/d/1_WanrCg6X69tjbOeOqQ2mIARJHpeOEVO6ehiO1N6H4I/edit.

3. Louise Kulp, "Artists' Books in Libraries: A Review of the Literature," *Art Documentation: Journal of the Art Libraries Society of North America* 24 (1) (2005): 5-10, doi: 10.1086/adx.24.1.27949342.

mid-2000s that the collection was fully inventoried or cataloged. The artists' books collection was recently assessed and the library determined the need to actively collect works created by people of color, especially women of color.⁴

Protest artwork is a common theme in the college's nearly 200-year history, and students' artwork content and themes increasingly demonstrate a focus on political engagement and active protest. Decker's current library director and staff are dedicated to collecting student artwork that addresses political and social justice issues.⁵

Metadata Differences

Zines, artists' books, and protest art differ from traditional books and media in a number of ways, including with respect to a work's intended audience. People usually create books and media with the goal of producing something that people will want to purchase; creators generally want their name visible and recognizable. This sentiment applies to artwork as well. MICA students and alumni sell their artwork (including zines, comics, and artists' books) and actively promote themselves online. In these instances, differences in the descriptive cataloging of resources such as zines, artists' books, and protest art versus traditional materials are generally manageable with not much difficulty. Potential cataloging challenges that can occur are when zines or artists' books lack traditional access points such as an easily identifiable title, as well as problems in subject description (for example, applying Library of Congress Subject Headings to countercultural material creates the potential for using terms that do not provide sufficient access, or that creators would find inappropriate). Protest art often lacks creator(s) names, for a variety of reasons including potential illegality.

4. "Collection Development Policy," Accessed June 7, 2018, https://docs.google.com/document/d/1EoOIRmCPy_cSIW82QWatOWs17p8o_dt2rbGwrBxk_NA/edit.

5. Decker Library, "Collection Development Policy."

For authority work, the primary difference in cataloging zines, artists' books, and protest art are the multifaceted challenges that arise when the creator of a work does not want their legal name associated with their work.

Creators' Privacy Concerns

To fully understand the privacy concerns of creators around their artwork, we asked several zinesters and artists about their identities. We inquired about the type of artwork they created and whether they use pseudonyms. We also asked creators if their privacy was more or less important than having their work seen by the greatest number of people, as well as any concerns they might have about what people know about them.

A recent case of a MICA alumni being "outed" by the institution was one of the reasons Kelly Swickard was interested in researching this topic. "Gaia" is a MICA alumnus who has created mural and graffiti work throughout Baltimore. The college sent out an email about a charity auction and Gaia's real name was used without their permission.⁶

In discussing their concerns with us, Gaia said that they use a pseudonym primarily because:

I have spent a majority of my life committing crimes against property. Whilst most of my Illegal works followed the path of least resistance in the wake of divestment, an abandoned building is still property, and thus many of my activities have amounted to potential felonies. Also, there is of course something liberating about maintaining a pseudonym: it precludes judgement.⁷

6. Laura Vozzella, "Unmasked: Gaia, Street Artist Specializing in Leatherclad Roosters," *The Baltimore Sun*, July 11, 2011, <http://www.baltimoresun.com/bal-unmasked-gaia-the-street-artist-specializing-in-leatherclad-roosters-cradling-john-the-baptists-head-20110708-story.html>.

7. Gaia, "Privacy Concerns," email interview by Kelly Swickard, March 15, 2018.

When specifically asked about privacy issues, Gaia discussed the importance of “political alliance”; they shared that “advocating for people on the margin is important to me, and thus secrecy is imperative in planning stages.”

Another MICA alumni and self-described “zine maker/wall writer/outsider artist” goes by the pseudonym AVOID or Adam Void. AVOID talked about having adopted their pseudonym in high school, which allows “the freedom to self-define my abilities and my voice.”⁸ AVOID also appreciated that using a pseudonym “allows for the audience to build the mystery for this character that I am using.” AVOID went on to say “I don’t see the conflict between privacy and having one’s work seen, or the reason my they would be mutually exclusive. Many more (if not all of the) people are looking for my work under my pseudonym than are looking for my government name.”

Many of the zinesters we talked with had written pseudonymously (or just using a first name), taking advantage of their anonymity to write about very private matters. Zinester Michelle described how important her privacy was by describing the consequences that would arise if the information in her zine were revealed:

My main concern is that my family will somehow find out my sexual orientation, which I intend to keep private. I also worry about whether or not my critiques of my workplace will somehow end up in the hands of my boss. I also don’t like many people knowing about my past drug-use, for fear of judgement, so I like to keep that information private as well.⁹

Another zinester, R. Logios, shared that her work was highly informed by her identity as a queer woman, a survivor of domestic abuse, and someone with chronic mental illnesses, writing: “I don’t really have a strong drive to have my work seen by a large audience. I see zines as more about personal connection, so I really only distribute them face

8. Adam Void, “Privacy Concerns,” email interview by Kelly Swickard, March 19, 2018.

9. Michelle, interview by Violet Fox, Questions about zines and privacy, March 12, 2018.

to face at zine fests, instead of trying to get distributed through shops, online, etc.”¹⁰ She concluded by explaining that she uses a pseudonym in large part because of concerns about safety.

Current Rules and Interpretation

Contributions to the Library of Congress’s National Authority File (NAF) are governed by standards maintained by the Program for Cooperative Cataloging’s (PCC) Name Authority Cooperative Program (NACO) as well as guidelines within Resource Description & Access (RDA).¹¹ Pseudonymous entries are allowed in the name authority record (NAR) as preferred names when creators have a “commonly known” identity.¹² The problem in current practice regarding adding privacy for creators lies in both RDA guidance and the mindset of catalogers.

RDA 9.2.3.4, regarding “Real Name” gives the following guidance: “If the preferred name or names for an individual are pseudonyms, and the individual does not use his or her real name as a creator or contributor, and the individual’s real name is known, then: record the individual’s real name as a variant name for each pseudonym.”¹³ Similarly, RDA 9.2.2.8 instructs the cataloger: “If an individual uses only one pseudonym and does not use his or her real name as a creator or contributor, choose the pseudonym as a preferred name for person. Record the individual’s real name as a variant name for person.”¹⁴

In addition, the FAQ-LC/PCC practice for creating NARs for persons who use pseudonyms explicitly states in A1.1 that when a “person uses one pseudonym and never uses the real name,” that the cataloger should “use the pseudonym as the 100 (Heading—personal name) and

10. R. Logios, interview by Violet Fox, Questions about zines and privacy, March 25, 2018.

11. “Frequently Asked Questions on Creating Personal Name Authority Records (NARs) for NACO,” <https://www.loc.gov/aba/pcc/naco/personnamefaq.html>.

12. “section 9.2.3.4 Real Name,” RDA: Resource Description and Access.

13. RDA, “section 9.2.3.4 Real Name.”

14. “section 9.2.2.8 “Individuals with More Than One Identity,”” RDA: Resource Description and Access.

add the un-used real name as a variant name in a 400 field (see reference) in the NAR.”¹⁵

The RDA and LC/PCC verbiage of “real name” could be considered problematic in itself, as it apparently conflates legal name with a sense of realness or authenticity. But the main problem is the instruction in RDA and LC/PCC guidelines that if the real name is known by the cataloger, the cataloger should include that name as a variant name.

As seen in the responses from our interviewees, assigning a creator’s name to works may jeopardize the creator. Many respondents stated they feel the need for privacy and separation of identities is key to their ability to continue their work. But there are no explicit instructions to NAF contributors to reflect on the needs of the subject of the authority work. As with other aspects of cataloging, the emphasis is primarily on the needs of the information seeker and little thought is given to the safety or security of the creator.

Diligence / Detective Work

Beyond the stated guidelines that instruct catalogers, a challenge lies in the mindset that catalogers bring to their work. In the case of zines, artists’ books, and protest art, resources often lack stated information about creators, leaving the cataloger to either leave off information about creators, or, more likely, to turn to Internet searches to find information. In a presentation given at ALA Midwinter 2018, Mississippi State University cataloger Ilda Cardenas described preliminary results from a survey of catalogers as indicating that catalogers often use social media instead of contacting authors or publishers directly.¹⁶ Cardenas described

15. “FAQ – LC/PCC practice for creating NARs for persons who use pseudonyms,” <http://www.loc.gov/catdir/cps/pseud.pdf>.

16. Ida Cardenas, “Catalogers Cyberstalking Authors: relationship between cataloging and social media,” Presentation, Cataloging Norms Interest Group, <https://www.eventscribe.com/2018/ALA-Midwinter/fsPopup.asp?Mode=presInfo&PresentationID=336318>.

this relationship between cataloging and social media in the title of her presentation “Catalogers Cyberstalking Authors.”

There is often a great wealth of information about creators available to catalogers who are willing to spend time looking through social media accounts or long dormant websites. In the authors’ experience, this can be a pleasurable part of our job duties, becoming “detectives” looking for clues about the creator. Is the Jasmine Smith who wrote the zine about gender norms the same as the Jasmine Smith who wrote their doctoral thesis on bioluminescence? There is a sense of satisfaction that comes with making definitive statements either confirming or refuting connections to creators and works.

The NACO program gives catalogers great latitude in deciding how much information should be added. The NACO FAQs for personal name authority records include questions such as “Should catalogers add references beyond those called for by the rules and the LCRI, if those references would enable automatic conflict detection and updating of known bibliographic records, which use a variant heading for the same person?,” the answer to which is that catalogers’ judgement in adding headings is appropriate as long as those variant headings are consistent with cataloging policies.¹⁷ Again, the FAQs fail to mention any consideration about the creators’ needs about confidentiality or safety.

Catalogers are often loathe to leave information unknown; our entire *raison d’être* is to provide as much information as possible to those who are looking for resources. We delight in tracking down information. But this detective work has the potential to do harm when we are dealing with resources outside the traditional publishing of books and media. Catalogers need to understand the very real danger posed by sharing inappropriate relationship about, for example, street artists who are protesting police violence or city inaction against economic hardships, or transgender artists who do not want previous art created under a dead name connected to their current art.

17. PCC, “Frequently Asked Questions on creating Personal Name Authority Records (NARs) for NACO.”

Technological and Administrative Solutions

There are a few administrative improvements that could be made to the Name Authority File contribution process that would ameliorate some of the challenges involved in respectfully addressing privacy concerns. First and foremost, the creation and maintenance of the name authority file needs to become more transparent to the people whose names are a part of the file. Information about the NACO program is available at LC's website, but the site is exclusively designed to be a resource for people contributing to NACO, not to non-NACO catalogers, non-cataloging library workers, or the public.

In order to accurately reflect people's identities, NACO contributors should err on the side of contacting creators whenever there is a concern about privacy issues. That task would be greatly eased if there were a public-facing NACO website that clearly stated the goals of NACO, and, imperatively, information about how people can contact NACO administrators if the information on their authority record is incorrect or contains information that the creator does not want reflected. To empower people to understand how and why information about them is being created and shared, and to provide access to requesting prompt changes to that information, is the best practice that cataloging librarians need to provide to the public to reflect our ideals. (The fact that once information has been shared on the Internet it is in many instances impossible to remove is an important consideration, discussed in the next section.)

Along with the ability for people to have the ability to request changes to their own information, the concept of data provenance should be incorporated into the NAF's structure. A clear history of when and how changes to authority records were made should be readily available to NACO contributors, and ideally, the public as well. The lineage of the information provided should be able to be ranked by the level of confidence in the data provided. Data provided by the subject of the authority record should be considered the most reliable data possible, and decisions regarding conflicting information should be decided by

giving that data highest priority. For example, the legal name of one of our interviewees, Gaia, was “outed” by a publicly accessible email to MICA alumni, but Gaia’s wishes should be reflected in their authority record by not recording their legal name as a variant name.

Another archival concept, the idea of information embargoes, could also be incorporated within the NAF to provide flexibility in sharing information about people. Those with authority records could request that information about them be made available at a certain point in the future. There also seems to be a need to reflect information in an authority record that is *never* available to the public. For example, Violet Fox was contacted by an author who had transitioned genders, did not want information about their dead name in an authority record, and did not want any reflection of their transgender status in an authority record. A note was added to reflect that the author requested no further information be added to the authority record, but unfortunately, there is no way to ensure that NACO contributors will understand and respect this essential request. The concept of the MARC field 667 (“Nonpublic General Note”) is a nod to this idea, but the MARC format does not have a way to secure sensitive information. Future iterations of the NAF, based on Linked Data formats, may provide alternatives that allow for the sharing of private information between institutions. The idea of storing sensitive information in the NAF is not without potential downsides, so these ideas would need to be considered in the light of data security issues.

Introducing an Ethics of Care Framework to Authority Work

We know that technological solutions will not solve societal problems, and in essence, the challenge discussed above can only be solved by reframing the way that catalogers think about information. The real shift that needs to happen is training NAF contributors to reframe their approach to information, shifting their perspective from considering

only the information seeker to considering both the information seeker as well as the subject of the information at hand. NACO contributors need to reflect on potential problems before adding any information to an authority record, or, indeed, before creating the record in the first place. Once information is shared, especially in a linked data environment, there is little hope of removing it from the Internet—it is a bell that can't be unrung.

The authors would like to introduce the concept of radical empathy to the practice of cataloging and creation of authority records, as first outlined in respect to information work by Michelle Caswell and Marika Cifor's 2016 article “From Human Rights to Feminist Ethics: Radical Empathy in Archives.” The framework of an ethics of care was first introduced by Carol Gilligan, an American psychologist, in her 1982 book, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*. Gilligan's initial ethics of care framing has been critiqued as relying on gender essentialism, but its emphasis on revealing the devaluation and exploitation of traditionally women's work, as well as fully understanding the context of justice and injustice in which we do our work, makes it an appealing ethical structure for those who are interested in highlighting and critiquing the power relations that underlie the status quo.¹⁸

Gilligan's ethics of care framework centers interpersonal relationships and care as the foundation of moral action.¹⁹ As Caswell and Cifor argue that archivists have an affective responsibility to the subject of their records, we argue that those creating authority records must recognize and seriously consider their responsibility to the subjects of those records. Catalogers must resist the temptation to see the records they create as simply about information and categorization; instead, they should take the time to recognize and empathize with the persons who that information is describing.

18. Maureen Sander-Staudt, “Care Ethics.” *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <http://www.iep.utm.edu/care-eth/>.

19. Michelle Caswell and Marika Cifor, “From Human Rights to Feminist Ethics: Radical Empathy in the Archives,” <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/0mb9568h>.

By thinking of the creator as a person and not a piece of data that one is entitled to discover, catalogers can be more mindful of the privacy and safety of the people being described. Catalogers should not hesitate to contact living artists and creators to confirm how they would like to be described. Our interviewees said over and over that their names are very important to them as well as their privacy. The ALA Code of Ethics confirms our profession's commitment to respecting privacy: "We protect each library user's right to privacy and confidentiality with respect to information sought or received and resources consulted, borrowed, acquired or transmitted."²⁰ This principle has most frequently been interpreted as a front-of-the-house issue, meaning that circulation records should not be revealed. But there needs to be full cooperation and understanding of this cooperation throughout library and archives staff, including catalogers. Those who are creating and editing personal name authority records need to take privacy rights of our subjects seriously, in both our guidelines and our practice.

Conclusion

Because of our position as workers in technical services, usually at least somewhat removed from the public, the idea of radical empathy can seem irrelevant to our work as catalogers. Taking the time to listen to the subjects of our authority control work can help us understand the consequences of introducing inappropriate information into our systems and can give us insight into the responsibilities we have towards the people we describe. Embracing the idea of an ethics of care can help us understand our work in the context of the larger information ecosystem and in emphasizing the importance of relationship building in the work we do in libraries.

20. American Library Association, "Code of Ethics," <http://www.ala.org/tools/ethics>.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank each of the artists and zinesters who graciously shared their thoughts with us: Michelle, Saorsa Free Press, Thomas Kula, Ed Blair, Mark Beechill, johnnie b. baker, R. Logios, Christian Valles, Gaia, and AVOID. Thanks also to Mel Leverich, Archivist & Collections Librarian at the Leather Archives & Museum, and Joshua Barton, Head of Cataloging and Metadata Services at Michigan State University Libraries.

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