

Virtual International Authority File (VIAF)

The Virtual International Authority File (VIAF) is a new, international service designed to provide convenient access to the world's major name authority files (limited in the initial stages of the service to names for persons). Its creators envision the VIAF as a building block for the Semantic Web to enable switching of the displayed form of names for persons to the preferred language and script of the Web user.

A multinational collaboration

VIAF is a joint effort of the Library of Congress, the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek, the Bibliothèque nationale de France and OCLC, in cooperation with an expanding number of other national libraries.

The long-term goal of the VIAF is the inclusion of authoritative names from many libraries into a global service that will be freely available via the Web. By linking disparate names for the same person or organization, the VIAF will provide a convenient means for a wider community of libraries and agencies to better repurpose bibliographic data produced by libraries serving different language communities.

How the VIAF service works

OCLC Research built special name-matching software that builds on development that underlies WorldCat Identities (<http://worldcat.org/identities>) and OCLC's work with FRBR (Functional Requirements of Bibliographic Records) bibliographic record clustering.

The VIAF project's matching criteria include examination of names associated with authorship of works listed in multiple national bibliographic files and WorldCat. The VIAF authority records are constructed from information derived during the matching processes and include elements from source authority and bibliographic records.

The VIAF service also provides a searchable interface to the VIAF file, and machine-to-machine services are available.

Participating in the VIAF consortium and the VIAF service

Agencies that wish to participate in VIAF must apply. The application process requires submission of test files of bibliographic and authority files from the participating agency to the VIAF consortium.

OCLC Research—on behalf of the VIAF consortium—processes the records to match name headings from the source files with VIAF records built from content previously supplied by other VIAF consortium members. If an agency's application is successful, the agency enters into agreement with the VIAF consortium and sends its full bibliographic and authority files to OCLC Research with updates sent on a regular cycle.

New participants receive reports and assist OCLC Research in making process adjustments as needed. The new content is published to the VIAF Web site at <http://viaf.org>.

VIAF consortium members periodically confer in face-to-face meetings, or more often by conference call. They also participate in setting the agenda and direction for the VIAF project.

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Participating organizations

- Library of Congress (also representing NACO [Name Authority Cooperative Program of the Program for Cooperative Cataloging])
- Deutsche Nationalbibliothek (German National Library)
- OCLC Online Computer Library Center, Inc.
- Bibliothèque nationale de France (National Library of France)
- Kungl. biblioteket – Sveriges nationalbibliotek (National Library of Sweden)
- Národní knihovna České republiky (National Library of the Czech Republic)
- תמואלה היירפסה (National Library of the State of Israel)
- Bibliotheca Alexandrina (Library of Alexandria, Egypt)
- Biblioteca Nacional de España (National Library of Spain)
- Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana (Vatican Library, Vatican City)
- Schweizerische Nationalbibliothek/Bibliothèque nationale suisse/Biblioteca nazionale svizzera (Swiss National Library)
- Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal (National Library of Portugal)
- Istituto Centrale Per Il Catalogo Unico Delle Biblioteche Italiane (ICCU) (Central Institute for the Union Catalogue of Italian Libraries and for Bibliographic Information, Italy)
- National Library of Australia

Goals of the VIAF service

- Linking national or regional-level authority records
- Expanding the concept of universal bibliographic control by (1) allowing national and regional variations in authorized form to coexist; and (2) supporting needs for variations in preferred language, script and spelling
- Playing a role in the emerging Semantic Web

For more information

To learn more about the VIAF service, and to initiate an application to participate, contact Barbara Tillett, (202) 707-4714, btill@loc.gov and visit <http://viaf.org>.

A display of the VIAF record for 'Anton Chekhov.' Multiple forms of names for this person appear in textual and graphical displays.

