

Authorities Management

Alma Authorities – Increased Flexibility and Accuracy

Authority vocabularies are collections of authorized forms of names, subjects, and other entities, which contain information about the entity as well as non-preferred forms and allow libraries and patrons to access bibliographic records related to these entities regardless of which form they are searching for.

Alma provides many authority records that are updated and maintained regularly by Ex Libris in the Community Zone. Authority files such as LC Names and Subjects, MeSH (Medical Subject Headings), GND (German), BARE (Norwegian) and many others are loaded into Alma's Community Zone (CZ). Ex Libris keeps these authority files up to date based on changes distributed by the authorizing agency. Any institution may use these records to authorize headings in their local bibliographic records, as well as maintain their own local authority files when needed.

Alma's approach to authority management is automating handling as much as possible, freeing up catalogers' time to handle the real challenges the complex world of metadata has to offer. It supports both manual and automated processes of linking bib headings to authority records and performing preferred term corrections, as well as updating bib headings when a linked authority record is changed. The Authority Control Task List allows catalogers to follow up on such changes as needed.

Alma's product team works closely with the catalogers' community, represented by the Alma Authority Focus Group, authority experts from a diverse group of libraries and institutions, to maintain robust authority control. In the coming years, authority control in Alma will be enhanced and improved in accordance with the community's wishes, technological advancements and metadata trends. Our vision is to make Alma's authority control more powerful and flexible, while also improving accuracy and automation.

Giving Libraries More Control

As different authority vocabularies around the world can be quite different, and may require different handling – our diverse, global community needs to be able to make decisions on how to handle their metadata. Alma's Authority Control Rules allow libraries to determine circumstances in which automated linking and preferred term correction will be performed or skipped, as well as tag cases requiring attention in the Authority Control Task List. These rules allow preventing specific bib headings from getting linked according to various elements such as field, source code, vocabulary and others – and the coming years will see more choices being added, to give libraries even more control.

Respecting MARC Subfields When Linking Bibliographic Headings

By default, the matching process used for automated linking is based on the content of the bib heading and the authority record's preferred / non-preferred term. Libraries will be able to limit linking also by the subfield codes the content is maintained in.

This can be done always, by setting the top rule to use the new "Subfield codes not identical" input parameters:

Name	Operator	Value
1 Subfield Codes	=	not identical

Workflow Setup

Link

Do not link

Or limited to specific vocabularies or circumstances by combining it with other input parameters:

Name	Operator	Value
1 Subfield Codes	=	not identical
2 Vocabulary	In List	LCNAMES, LCSH

Workflow Setup

Link

Do not link

For more information see [Linking Bibliographic Headings Rules](#)

Flexible Handling of Diacritics

In some languages, such as Finnish or Icelandic, use of diacritics changes the meaning of a word, while in other languages, such as Arabic or Hebrew, diacritics should not have any impact on the matching and linking of bib headings to authority records. Libraries will be able to limit linking for mismatching diacritics in the vocabularies where this is needed (and in multi-lingual authority vocabularies, also take into account the language specified on the bib heading).

Name	Operator	Value
1 Diacritics	=	not identical
2 Vocabulary	In List	SLM/FIN, FINAE, YSO/FIN

Workflow Setup

Link

Do not link

For more information see [Linking Bibliographic Headings Rules](#)

Streamlined Processing and Improved Automation

Alma's automated processes can link, correct and update bib records, and also include partial linking capabilities so that if a perfect matching authority containing subdivision subfields is not found, but there is an authority record matching the core subfields of the bib headings – those subfields will be linked so that if the preferred term is changes, the library's bib record will be automatically updated. These automated updates can be reviewed by catalogers in the Authority Control Task List. In the coming years, Ex Libris will enhance these automated capabilities to address more scenarios and provide libraries with more automatic updates.

Partial Linking of Name/Title Headings

When a perfect name/title matching authority record does not exist, Alma will try to find a partial match – a name authority that matched the name part of the bib heading. This way, if the contributor changes their name the linked name part of the bib heading will get updated, even without a matching name/title authority.

The Alma Authority Focus Group is working with the Alma product team to determine which title subfields can be safely disregarded in this partial matching process, without increasing the risk of a false match being found.

For more information see [Partial Linking for Name/Title Headings](#)

Flexible handling of subdivisions and partial linking

Today, Alma's automated linking process regards either a perfectly matching authority, including all the subdivision subfields present in the bib heading, or a partially-matching authority, containing only the core subfields with no subdivisions. If an authority record exists containing some of the bib headings' subdivisions – it is not considered a partial match.

Alma's automated subdivision handling for partial linking will be enhanced to consider better partial matches when some of the subdivisions exist in the authority record, to provide as much of the bib heading with automated updates upon authority record changes.

The Alma Authority Focus Group is working with the Alma product team to determine in which cases subfields can be safely disregarded in the enhanced partial matching process, without increasing the risk of a false match being found.

For more information see [Partial Linking for Name/Title Headings](#)

Enhanced Authority Control Task List in Networks

In many Alma networks, the catalogers of the member institutions handle the shared catalog from their own Alma environment, allowing many catalogers to work together in a streamlined, efficient collaboration. The Authority Control Task List will be enhanced to better support this collaboration when handling automated updates to the shared bibliographic headings.

For more information see [Using the Authority Control Task List](#)

Improved accurate, ID-based linking

Today, Alma supports either text-based matching, which depends on correctly comparing text strings to find a match, or a strict ID-based linking for those institutions that maintain metadata containing the authority records' ID in \$\$0. However, as metadata trends encourage more libraries to include linked data elements such as URIs in their records, it is possible that some records in the catalog will include an ID that will allow for more accurate matching, while others may not. Ex Libris is exploring ways to make it easier for libraries to populate their MARC records with URIs, combined with more flexible linking strategies which will help libraries make use of such unique identifiers when present, while maintaining the matching capabilities when an ID can't be used.