Implementation of EAC-CPF (Encoded Archival Context – Corporate bodies, Persons, Families") in France: towards the development of national authority files
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Abstract:
This paper presents a collaborative project set up by the Association of French archivists and the Archives of France. It aims to create standardised descriptions of records creators (or to share the existing information) and to propose patterns archival institutions could reuse to describe their own records creators. The scope is to provide the French Departmental Archives with an easy-to-use, interactive and participatory tool. ISAAR(CPF) is the reference content standard and EAC-CPF is the communication standard, since the project managers wanted to provide archival institutions with re-usable and real exchangeable authority records which could be imported in their own information system.

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ISAAR (CPF) introduced in archival descriptive practice the separate and linked description of archives and creators along with the authority control of creators, in order to manage the many-to-many relationships between fonds and creators. So, creators can be related to series and set of records they really created, independently from the fonds which those series and records belong to. Another important characteristic of the ICA standard is probably the strong attention paid to the problems of the interoperability across systems and domains. Sharing and/or exchanging authority records is a very efficient way to navigate between systems and to allow for retrieval of meaningful information across domains. This approach reached its maturity in 2010 with the development of the XML schema EAC-CPF (Encoded Archival Context – Corporate bodies, Persons, Families), to be used not only by archival institutions but also by other professions, including libraries, as part of projects federating resources from various sources on Corporate bodies, Persons and Families.

This paper will present a project for developing a national authority file about local services of the French State administration, which aim not only to establish an interoperability framework between archival data, but also to link archival data with other cultural and heritage data.

1. Background, objectives and administrative framework

1.1 Requirements and scope of the project

French archival institutions are expected to prepare authority records describing the creators of the archival materials they hold, using ISAAR (CPF) in order to ensure consistency and to enable data exchange. At the annual meeting of the territorial Archives of the Association of French archivists, it was decided to address this issue as part of a collaborative work.

Indeed, since the French Revolution till the recent changes of the local services of the State administration, agencies and organisations are equivalent or very similar in the different departments[1].

According to the article R. 212-62 of the Code of Cultural heritage, the departmental archives ("archives départementales") keep:
- archives of the pre-French Revolution provincial and local institutions seized by the revolutionaries (parliaments, chartered cities, abbeys, churches, etc.)
- archives of departmental and territorial services since the French Revolution;
- archives of local services of the State administration and of public agencies whose headquarters are located in the departments;
- notarial records created by notaries of the departments;
- records created by small cities which may be transferred to departmental archives;
- private archives which may be deposited or whose ownership may be transferred to the departmental councils by gift, bequest or purchase; it is also quite common that private fonds are physically separated and held by several archival institutions.

Thus, all archival institutions have to prepare authority records describing the same types of records creators. For instance, the Archives de Paris will have to prepare an authority record about the "Tribunal de grande instance de Paris" and the Archives départementales de Gironde will have to create another one about the "Tribunal de grande instance de Bordeaux" [ordinary courts of original jurisdiction]. The Archives départementales du Nord will have to describe the "Direction régionale de l'environnement, de l'aménagement et du logement du Nord-Pas-de-Calais" whereas the Archives départementales de Moselle will have to provide information about the "Direction régionale de l'environnement, de l'aménagement et du logement de Lorraine" [regional directorates for environment, planning, and housing].

Moreover, French archivists start to perceive that the reference to national standardised forms is necessary for interoperability with other information resources when archival descriptions (finding aids) and contextual information (archival authority records) prepared at national level are brought into international projects such as APEX (Archives Portal Europe network of excellence; http://www.apex-project.eu). APEX objective is "to build a portal for archives in Europe, in which the national archives of twenty-eight European countries, in close collaboration with Europeana, will create a common access to archival descriptions and digital collections".

Therefore, a collaborative project was set up by the Association of French archivists and the Archives of France. The project's scope consists in producing standardised descriptions of records creators (or in sharing the existing information) and in proposing patterns, which could serve as basic documentary materials, ready to be locally adapted by each archival institution. The working group does not produce authority records to be used as such but patterns easily reusable by different archival institutions to describe their own records creators. Every archivist can participate in the preparation of these patterns. The scope is to provide the French archival community with an easy-to-use, interactive and participatory tool.

The National Library of France (BnF) maintains national authority files[2] but it was decided not to use them for several reasons:

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[1] In the administrative division of France, the department (French: département) is one of the three levels of government below the national level, between the region and the commune.
[2] See: http://catalogue.bnf.fr

- entities archival institutions have to describe are not necessarily described in the National Library authority files; it is interesting to note that the National Library authority files includes both patterns about a general category of entity and specific authority records about specific entities;
- the same standard is applied to build authorised forms of names (the first purpose of the BnF authority record is the disambiguation of the name), but other data contained in the National Library authority files do not meet the needs of departmental archives; contextual information is required to describe records creators (there is no contextual information in the National Library authority records);
- the authority records are compliant with MARC, not with ISAAR (CPF);
- in the National Library authority files, there are no hierarchical or associative relationships (only chronological relationships are managed).

However, links are established to the National Library authority files every time a pattern was established for a general category of entity. In France, archivists and librarians participate in the same transverse working groups (EAD, EAC-CPF). So, there is a strong desire to bring together archival and bibliographic resources and to create information networks.

1.2. A partnership between a central government agency and a professional association

A scientific and technical control over the authority records produced in the framework of the project is necessary. Moreover, the national administrative level should be taken into account, in order to make more understandable the history of local services of the state administration. So, a convention was signed in September 2010 between the President of Association of French Archivists and the Head of the Archives of France, for the preparation and dissemination of these authority records compliant with ISAAR(CPF), describing the French public services and agencies since 1800.

The "Service interministériel des Archives de France" (SIAF) is a service of central government. It depends on the Ministry of Culture. It gives advice, it plays an incentive and regulatory role, it acts as an assessor and as a controller regarding selection and appraisal, arrangement and description, preservation and access to public archives other than those of the Foreign Office and Defence departments. As part of this project, the SIAF provides a methodological expertise. It determinates the structure of authority records, identifies elements to use in addition to those which are mandatory according to ISAAR(CPF) and EAC-CPF, it defines rules for establishing authorised forms of name of corporate bodies and persons. Authority records are prepared by members of the working group in the framework of a jointly determined multi-annual program. Then, professionals have access to the authority records on the platform of the Association of French Archivists[3].

2. Methodology

2.1. Standards and exchange formats

ISAAR(CPF) is the reference content standard for the description of agents, because:
- it enables us to prepare authority records with standardised forms of name of records creators; these standardised forms of name constitute access points;

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[3] This platform is available at: https://www.ica-atom.org/aaf/

- it enables us to prepare authority records providing information on records creators, as well as links to other records creators;
- it enables us to create and manage separate but linked archival and contextual descriptions;
- relationships may be established not only with archival resources, but also with other type of resources (bibliographic, artefact, etc.);
- it encourages the exchange of authority records.

Using a content standard is a good thing, but it is not enough. The project managers wanted to provide archival institutions with re-usable and real exchangeable authority records which could be imported in their information system. So, it was decided to use EAC-CPF as communication standard, because it is fully compliant with ISAAR(CPF), it is intended to be interoperable with other XML metadata and it is intended to be used not only by archivists, but also by other professionals, including librarians, as part of projects federating resources from various sources related to corporate bodies, persons and families.

ISAAR(CPF) does not define specific rules for the creation of the "authorised form(s) of name". It simply refers to "national or international rules or conventions applied by the agency that created the authority record". Archival institutions are expected to adopt existing rules or to develop new ones. In France, there is no equivalent of the UK *NCA Rules for the construction of personal, place and corporate names*. A possible way to implement ISAAR(CPF) in France can be the use of standards developed by libraries on the form and structure of headings, i.e. the AFNOR (Association française de normalisation) standards, including, for corporate bodies, the standard NF Z 44-060, Catalogue of authors and anonymous. Form and structure of headings - Corporate bodies[4].

Authority records are then indexed by functions and administrative areas according to the Archives of France thesaurus for indexing local archives (http://www.archivesdefrance.culture.gouv.fr/thesaurus/).

2.2. A tool for producing and publishing authority records: ICA-AtoM

At its inaugural meeting, the working group chose a software for creating authority records: ICA-AtoM, an open-source software developed for ICA and enabling the production and publication on Internet of descriptive records compliant with the international descriptive standards[5].

It was decided to use ICA-AtoM because:
- The software runs in a web environment, thus allowing contributors to work in a network with the same edit page;
- The tool is intuitive, easy to handle, it needs little training;
- It is not necessary to know the EAC-CPF, it is enough to know ISAAR (CPF);
- The production of authority records and their publication on Internet are almost simultaneous;
- The data entered are not "prisoners" of the software, they can be exported into XML/EAC-CPF by users and re-imported into another information system.

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[4] NF Z 44-060 (déc. 1996) : Catalogue d'auteurs et d'anonymes : forme et structure des vedettes de collectivités-auteurs.
[5] The ICA-AtoM official website is at: https://www.ica-atom.org

Only one ICA-AtoM module is used (module for adding/editing authority records compliant with ISAAR (CPF)). The edit pages include different fields equivalent to elements of the descriptive standard; these elements are grouped within descriptive areas. ICA-AtoM enables us to link easily different authority records describing entities. The default values to characterise the categories of relationships with other corporate bodies, persons and families are the same as those proposed in ISAAR(CPF): association, family, hierarchical and temporal. However, these values can be changed or other values can be added in the table of terms. Thus, the values in English were translated into French, as well as more generally menus and pop-up windows of the module devoted to authority records.

2.3. Developing best practices

The working group developed guidelines for creating authority records using ICA-AtoM. These guidelines enable the participants to produce homogeneous and standardised authority records[6].

First, in addition to the mandatory elements of ISAAR, the guidelines recommend to use some optional elements (other forms of name, history, mandates, etc..) and to establish mappings with EAC-CPF. For example, for the identification area, creators of authority records should record information in the fields "Type of entity", "Authorised form(s) of name" (mandatory elements in ISAAR) and eventually "Other forms of name" for acronyms. For the description area, you have to provide "Dates of existence", "History", "Legal Status", "Functions and activities", "Mandates/Sources of authority" and possibly "Places" for the jurisdiction and "Structure or Genealogy" when many corporate bodies have a similar structure and composition.
The guidelines also provide rules for the construction of authorised forms of names for corporate bodies, adapting the AFNOR standards, which were originally developed for authority control in libraries.

According to the AFNOR NF Z 44-060, the authorised form of name of a corporate body includes the name of the corporate body, and, if necessary, qualifiers (dates, location, jurisdiction, functions,...). to avoid any risk of confusion with homonyms. In order to create generic authority records which may be reused by many archival institutions, too specific location qualifiers should not be used.

Examples of generic authorised forms of names:
- Institut régional du travail social (région) [for a regional institute of social work]
- Service pénitentiaire d'insertion et de probation (département) [for a penitentiary service for integration and probation]
- Maison d'arrêt (commune, département) [for a detention house]

The name of the corporate body may also include the name of the main corporate body and the name of the subordinate corporate body. Sub-bodies are established subordinately under the name of a higher level body in the corporate hierarchy. According to the AFNOR standard, a subordinate corporate body is any corporate body performing legislative, judicial, administrative, military, diplomatic or information functions; the name of a subordinate corporate body is considered as a sub-heading within the form of name.

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[6] See: http://www.archivistes.org/IMG/pdf / Manual-AtoM_2012.pdf

Examples of authorised forms of names including the name of a subordinate corporate body:
- France. Tribunal de commerce (commune, département) [for a commercial court]
- Département. Direction territoriale de la protection judiciaire de la jeunesse [for a departmental directorate of legal protection for youths]

Schools, universities, libraries, theatres, museums, hospitals, churches and banks are not considered as subordinate corporate bodies, unless they perform administrative functions in these areas. Thus, there is no subordinate heading, the authorised form of name is the name of the entry. For instance, the authorised form of name of a tourist office will be "Office de tourisme (commune, département)" [for a tourist information centre].

However, the AFNOR NF Z 44-060 standard presents problems for forms of name which include main/subordinate corporate bodies. The AFNOR standard has a top-down approach, while archivists have rather a bottom-up approach. A records creator may be an office or a section, its name may imply itself its subordination. The name of this creator should be considered as a sub-heading, and very long authorised forms of name maybe result (for instance: "Région. Direction régionale des entreprises, de la concurrence, de la consommation, du travail et de l'emploi. Unité territoriale du département" [for a territorial subdivision of a Regional directorate for companies, competition, consumption, work and employment]). There is no limit on what sub-bodies are considered for naming.

Furthermore, knowledge of the context helped the members of the working group to refine the rules of AFNOR standards, especially for places qualifiers. For instance, the authorised form of name of a contentious court will be "France. Tribunal du contentieux de l'incapacité (commune siège de l'Agence régionale de santé)", instead of "France. Tribunal du contentieux de l'incapacité (commune, département)" [for a court of protection and incapacity].

The guidelines provide guidance on how to inform other descriptive elements. For example, creation date, and eventually dates of dissolution of the corporate body should be recorded in ISO 8601 format (YYYY / YYYY, YYYY-MM-DD, etc..). The official dates, mentioned by mandates, are preferred (the dates of application or of real existence will be mentioned in the "History" element); regarding the dates of the French revolution, the Gregorian dates will be recorded; for a still existing institution, the EAC-CPF schema, which is more restrictive than EAD, does only accept the form "2099" (not "9999").

To record information about functions and activities of judicial institutions, it was decided that data would be structured into paragraphs according to the following plan:
1. Jurisdiction of the court/tribunal
1.1. Civil competence
1.2. Criminal competence
1.3. Administrative competence
1.4. Other competence
2. Competence not covered [if applicable].
For such competence: see such court/tribunal
3. Appeal procedures

Regarding relations with other corporate bodies, only generic relationships are taken into account (for example, the "directions départementales des territoires" [departmental directorates of territories] can be linked to "directions départementales de l'équipement et de

l'agriculture" [departmental equipment directorates] and to "directions régionales de l'environnement, de l'aménagement et du logement" [regional directorates for planning and housing], etc..). In principle, the number of relations is unlimited in ICA-AtoM. However, relationships are limited to 5 (at first, chronological relationships with direct predecessors/successors, then and hierarchical relationships, lastly, association relationships).

2.4. Workflow

Workflow is the following. Archivists of departmental archives create in ICA-AtoM generic authority records for a domain of activity (justice, agriculture, transportation, etc.). These generic authority records are validated by the Archives of France. Then, other archivists of departmental archives can export these patterns from ICA-AtoM in order to enrich them with local contextual information and to get specific authority records.

3. Perspectives: towards the development of national authority files?

3.1. Identifiers

If you want to exchange and compare authority data with other data, authority records should be provided with stable and permanent identifiers. The permanent and reliable identification of each resource is a major issue to allow their quotability and thus contributing to their visibility. Today, web developments, mainly around the "web of data", lead us to consider any type of object, entity, concept as a resource potentially accessible by a human as well by a machine.

However, ICA-AtoM does not control identifiers of authority records. It is just said in the official documentation: "Record a unique description identifier in accordance with local and/or national conventions".

So, for the moment only "local" identifiers are assigned to the generic authority records: a first mandatory segment includes the country code (FR) and the official identifier (SIRET code) of the Association of French Archivists, a second segment includes the sequential number of the pattern. The archival institutions which will export and re-use generic authority records from ICA-AtoM in order to create precise authority records will have to use ARK identifiers. Assigning ARK identifiers to these precise authority records is necessary to federate them and to link them with other contextual data.

3.2. Issues with ICA-AtoM

The creation of authority records in ICA-AtoM implies a strict control and a centralised management of identifiers of authority records that are assigned by one of the project managers. Indeed, there is no warning message if you create two ISAAR authority records on the same records creator.

In addition, ICA-AtoM is more compliant with ISAAR (CPF) than with EAC-CPF. Exports in EAC-CPF need to be improved. For example, if information is recorded in the element "Functions and occupations" of ISAAR(CPF), this information is duplicated in tags <function> and <occupation> of the exported EAC-CPF file. Text information recorded in

elements of the description area appear in <term> indexing tags and not in <descriptiveNote> elements which would be more appropriate.

ICA-AtoM enables us to link easily different authority records describing entities. But the problem is that if a link is created from a record A to a record B, a link from the record B to the record A is automatically created but we can not give direction to these links.

Relationships with other records creators are imperfectly translated in EAC-CPF exports. The @href attribute of the element <cpfRelation> refers to a system identifier, not to the identifier of the related authority record.

3.3. Merging various initiatives

In parallel with this project, the Archives of France changed their Guidelines for Preparation of Records Retention Schedules. The guidelines include authority records describing records creators and/or the function they perform.

Moreover, the Archives of France were solicited to participate in the US Social Networks and Archival Context (SNAC) project, which derives EAC-CPF records from existing EAD finding aids to link descriptions of records creators to one another and to descriptions of a wide variety of resources. EAD records from the database BORA ("Base d'Orientation et de Recherche dans les Archives"), describing personal papers and photographic archives kept by French archives were made available to SNAC. The scope is that the derived EAC-CPF records could form the basis of a national archival authority file and be included into the European portal archives.

The National Archives are migrating their authority files to their future archival information system (SIA). Authority data are essential because they will be used to bridge the management tools and the documentation tools and to link archival fonds of creators that may have hierarchical, chronological, family or associative relationships.

The National Archives of Overseas Territories at Aix-en-Provence produce authority records describing records creators but also other persons, families or corporate bodies only mentioned in finding aids, to provide end users with additional contextual information to help them to better understand and use archival descriptions. The archivists themselves are provided with a very useful tool or a more accurate processing of information. Indeed, this control tool help them to fix errors, to distinguish one entity from another, to federate names variants for the same entity and to discover "agents" otherwise "hidden" within the finding aids.

Lastly, the Ministry of Culture and Communication initiated an important revision of its information system. The HADOC project (Harmonisation of production of cultural data) aims to establish a standardized framework for the production of cultural data, including the definition of common data models and shared authority files describing cultural actors.

The exchange of authority data is in its infancy. All these initiatives need to be federated in order to share and exchange information. There would be many benefits for archivists:
- Avoid duplication of efforts
- Provide archivists with consistent use of the same forms of name across descriptions
- Make it possible to identify the interrelations of different collections

A shared national authority file would also have benefits for users that would be provided with:
- Integrated access to distributed archival resources
- Contextual data for not only the records of one creator, but other related records
- A biographical-historical resource

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