

Institutional practices in gender recording: an analysis of National Libraries*

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ABSTRACT

The representation of gender metadata in personal name authority records maintained by national libraries in the Americas and Europe is the central focus of this study. Anchored in contemporary discussions on descriptive practices and standards, the research investigates the application of frameworks such as RDA, alongside metadata encoding formats like MARC21, UNIMARC, and INTERMARC, in the inclusion and treatment of gender-related information. Adopting a descriptive and exploratory methodology, the study examines public authority catalogues and analyses institutional responses to identify how gender is recorded, made visible, or omitted. The findings reveal substantial variation across institutions: while some adopt binary classification models, others employ more inclusive and expanded vocabularies, and certain libraries opt to suppress gender data from public access. The analysis further highlights the potential of semantic web technologies and linked data as ethical and sustainable alternatives, enabling the connection of authority records to external sources such as VIAF, Wikidata, and ORCID. The study concludes that, when managed with responsibility and transparency, gender metadata not only supports academic research and improves data quality but also enhances the visibility of diverse contributions to cultural and scientific production.

KEYWORDS

Name Authority records; Gender; Linked Data; Semantic Web.

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1. Introduction

In recent years, the growing awareness of gender equality has extended to the field of Information Science, aligning with global initiatives such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 5 (United Nations 2015). Within the field of cataloguing, we consider the possibility that adequate representation of gender in authority records can contribute to inclusion, visibility, and improved information retrieval.

Authority control systems, in their more recent conceptualization, are intended to support the identification and disambiguation of entities. These systems operate under institutional policies while relying on shared principles of standardization and interoperability. Descriptive guidelines such as the Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules (AACR2r) and Resource Description and Access (RDA) provide structured criteria for bibliographic description. RDA offers greater flexibility and alignment with conceptual models, including the optional inclusion of attributes such as gender. In metadata schemas, MARC21 uses field 375 to record gender information, while INTERMARC employs field 120 for the same purpose. However, the specific values used to represent gender vary across institutions, depending on local cataloguing policies, controlled vocabularies, and the extent of alignment with international standards.

The inclusion of gender in personal name authority records (NARs) has raised ethical concerns related to privacy, consent, and the risk of misrepresentation, especially for transgender and non-binary individuals. This debate has led institutions to move away from recording gender as a fixed attribute, reinforcing the need for alternatives that respect identities while ensuring data integrity and interoperability. In this scenario, the Semantic Web and Linked Data offer flexible, decentralized, and ethically aligned solutions for gender representation. Semantic enrichment has become a key strategy for making metadata more granular, multilingual, and semantically meaningful, particularly in Libraries, Archives, and Museums (LAMs). As Zeng (2019) notes, this process improves data quality, discoverability, and contextualization. This approach is increasingly relevant to authority records for representing identity attributes more inclusively.

Although this study does not focus on the conceptual debate surrounding gender, it adopts the understanding that gender is understood as a form of self-identification. According to Butler (1990), gender does not constitute a fixed identity, but rather a set of repeated and socially regulated practices. This conception questions the validity of authority systems that operate with binary and static categories. As Scott (1995) posits, gender is a social construct that transcends biological sex, encompassing identities, behaviours, social expectations, and roles.

Grounded in this understanding, the present study shifts from theoretical discussions to the practical and technical dimensions of gender representation in authority data. The epistemology underlying bibliographic authority systems often operates with normative assumptions about identity. These systems tend to establish fixed categories based on criteria external to individuals' self-identification. These assumptions are challenged by gender studies, which propose a relational and situated ontology and emphasize the plurality and fluidity of identities. In this context, the study addresses the following research question: how do national libraries represent gender metadata in personal name authority records, and what institutional policies guide these practices? The objective is to examine how national libraries include gender metadata in authority records. The study focuses on institutional decisions guiding these practices and explores the potential use of semantic enrichment strategies to improve interoperability and inclusivity.

2. Theoretical framework

With the exponential growth of data, effective representation becomes essential. Marcondes (2001) argues that information is only useful if it can be found, underscoring the importance of discoverability. Bibliographic and authority records result from representational choices that shape visibility in catalogues. The cataloguer's judgment directly influences how information is organized and accessed, potentially highlighting or obscuring certain individuals, groups, or topics (Martin 2021).

Olson (2002) highlights that knowledge organization systems often reflect dominant power structures, making identities that fall outside traditional norms invisible. This perspective is key to understanding the epistemological challenges of including gender in standardized authority records. Ethical and technical guidelines, such as the Cataloguing Code of Ethics (2021) and the IFLA's International Cataloguing Principles (2016), aim to promote fairness, accuracy, and consistency in cataloguing practices. Authority records play a central role in this context by documenting decisions and connecting name variants, functioning both as technical mechanisms and intellectual frameworks (Taylor and Joudrey 2009; Tillett 2004).

As Possemato (2025) observes, conceptual models have shifted cataloguing practices toward a more contextualized description of entities. Oliver (2021) further emphasizes that the RDA was designed for use beyond traditional library settings, with the goal of supporting Linked Data principles and encouraging the adoption of Semantic Web technologies to ensure the continued relevance of bibliographic infrastructure.

The inclusion of gender as an attribute in personal name authority records (NARs) is conceptually grounded in the FRAD, which informs the structure and logic of the RDA standard. In this framework, RDA instruction 9.7 defines gender as an optional descriptive element and recommends the use of controlled vocabulary terms such as "male," "female," or "unknown," allowing cataloguers to include this attribute when relevant and in accordance with institutional policies. Building on this shared foundation, the creation, exchange, and long-term management of authority records depend on the use of standardized metadata schemas, which are essential for maintaining consistency and interoperability across institutions and platforms. MARC 21 has long been the primary format for encoding bibliographic and authority data, while newer models like BIBFRAME align with Linked Data and Semantic Web principles. Among MARC 21's five formats, the Authority format standardizes names, titles, and subjects. Following the development of RDA, updates to MARC 21 such as the addition of 3XX fields have enhanced the descriptive detail of entities (Seikel and Steele 2011).

These fields were designed to enhance the description of entities, enabling more granular identification of persons, corporate bodies, and works. Within this structure, field 375 was incorporated to record gender as a personal attribute. According to its scope note, this field specifies "information about a person's gender, including applicable dates" (Library of Congress 2022). Although optional, it provides a structured way to represent gender identity in authority records. Field 375 includes subfield \$a, which records the gender with which the person identifies.¹

¹ Other subfields complement the 375 structure: \$s and \$t indicate the start and end dates of the identification, when applicable; \$u links to an external URI for the gender term; \$v indicates the source of the information; \$0 contains an authority

Since 2001, the UNIMARC Authority format has included field 120 to record gender, using pre-defined values: “a” (female), “b” (male), “c” (transgender), “u” (unknown), and “x” (not applicable).² In this context, the inclusion of gender in authority records has become a prominent topic of discussion within cataloguing communities.³

The Library of Congress and the Name Authority Cooperative Program (NACO) instructed cataloguers to include gender in authority records based on a binary model, often relying on assumptions (Martin 2021). This practice has been widely criticized by Billey, Drabinski, and Roberto (2014), who, grounded in queer theory, argue that gender is a socially constructed category and condemn the reinforcement of fixed, binary identities. They also highlight the risks of inferring gender from names or biographical data, stressing that retrieval functionalities should not outweigh the need for accurate and respectful representation. Amid these debates, the PCC Ad Hoc Task Group on Gender in Name Authority Records recommended in 2016 that gender be recorded only upon explicit self-identification. In 2022, the group advised discontinuing the use of field 375 and removing it from existing records, allowing gender information only in unstructured fields like 670 or 678 (PCC Ad Hoc Task Group on Recording Gender in Personal Name Authority Records 2022).

Thompson (2016) examines Name Authority Records (NARs) related to trans authors, highlighting how cataloguing practices based on the FRAD and RDA models particularly the use of field 375 for recording gender can result in involuntary outing and violations of privacy. As an alternative, the author proposes that authors be granted greater agency to self-identify through systems such as ORCID or linked data platforms and advocates for a more ethical cataloguing approach, grounded in privacy, consent, and respect for self-identification, to avoid discriminatory practices and promote fairer representation.

Adolpho (2019) argues that the rigidity of cataloguing models limits the adequate representation of gender identity. Imposing fixed notions of gender fails to reflect its diversity and risks reinforcing exclusion and discrimination. To respect self-determination, the author advocates abandoning binary and inflexible models in favour of consent-based and adaptable practices. Burns et al. (2022) align with PCC guidance in treating gender as a high-risk attribute in authority data: it can be inaccurate, misrepresent trans people, and enable non-consensual disclosure. The report therefore recommends not recording gender in authority records unless a clear purpose exists and informed consent is obtained, prioritising self-identification, suppression of former names when requested, and the use of inclusive vocabularies such as Homosaurus.⁴

control number or identifier; \$1 provides a persistent URI for a real-world entity; \$2 identifies the source vocabulary, such as the Gender, Sex, and Sexual Orientation (GSSO) ontology; \$6 links language versions of the record; \$7 captures provenance and reliability; and \$8 manages relationships between fields within the same record (Library of Congress 2022).

² In 2023, the online edition of the UNIMARC Manual for Authorities introduced updates aligned with the IFLA-LRM, restructuring fields and subfields to support both traditional bibliographic practices and models based on entities and relationships (IFLA 2024).

³ Several studies and institutional initiatives have addressed the implications, challenges, and possibilities surrounding this practice, including works by Billey, Drabinski, and Roberto (2014); Thompson (2016); Adolpho (2019); Wainer (2019); the Program for Cooperative Cataloguing (PCC) on Gender in Name Authority Records (2016, 2022); Carbajal (2020); Martin (2021); Burns et al. (2022); Lindsey, Suiter, and Hanselman (2022); NISO (2022) and Possemato (2025).

⁴ <https://homosaurus.org/>

This debate remains ongoing and continues to evolve. As Possemato (2025) observes, the inclusion of gender in authority records takes place within a broader movement of transformation in cataloguing practices, driven by the adoption of Semantic Web technologies and the transition toward entity-based models. The traditional view, which regarded gender as a fixed and inherent attribute of the entity, is increasingly being replaced by approaches that acknowledge the sociocultural construction and fluidity of gender. Also, although often criticized for reinforcing binary norms, the inclusion of gender information in authority records can offer meaningful benefits, such as enhancing the visibility of marginalized identities, improving information retrieval, and supporting the needs of specific communities. However, these benefits are only realized when such metadata is recorded with informed consent, grounded in self-identification, and allows for future revision or suppression. As emphasized in the Metadata Best Practices for Trans and Gender Diverse Resources, “gender information can enhance discoverability, support community needs, and affirm the identities of individuals or creators who choose to have this metadata included” (Gender & Sexuality in Information Studies Special Interest Group 2022, 4). Billey, Drabinski, and Roberto (2014) argue that classification and subject access systems are not neutral. They embed dominant ideologies that can marginalize queer and nonbinary identities. Also warns that metadata structures often fail to reflect the complexities of transgender experiences, particularly when they rely on rigid authority control mechanisms that disregard the nuances of gender fluidity. Together, these perspectives underscore the ethical imperative of designing metadata practices that affirm identity while resisting the enforcement of normative taxonomies.

2.1 Semantic Approaches to Gender Representation in Personal Name Authority Records

The Semantic Web, proposed by Berners-Lee, Hendler, and Lassila (2001), addresses the Web’s limitation in enabling machines to interpret and process data meaning. As Pomerantz (2015) notes, it is not just about publishing data online but about structuring it in an interconnected way. In this context, Berners-Lee (2006) introduced Linked Data as a set of practices for publishing and linking data in machine-readable formats. Institutions like the Library of Congress, the National Library of France (BNF), the German National Library (DNB), and the National Library of Spain (BNE) apply these principles by publishing authority data in RDF and offering SPARQL endpoints. These implementations demonstrate how authority records can transition from rigid cataloguing frameworks to more dynamic, semantically enriched environments.

Semantic enrichment involves generating new metadata or enhancing existing ones by adding contextual and meaningful information, improving interoperability and connection to external datasets (Isaac et al. 2015). This process goes beyond adding data, as it establishes semantic relationships that situate objects within broader contexts, linking them to entities like people, places, or topics (Manguinhas et al. 2016).

Linked Data sources provide external identifiers and relationships that can be used in authority enrichment. According to Smith-Yoshimura (2018), the most used are id.loc.gov, VIAF, DBpedia, GeoNames, and Wikidata, with notable growth in Wikidata between 2015 and 2018. VIAF presents gender as textual values aggregated from institutions, while Wikidata encodes gender using

persistent URIs, enabling semantic interoperability. Semantic enrichment connects authority records to external sources like VIAF, Wikidata, DBpedia, and GSSO, incorporating diverse and community-driven definitions to improve accuracy and ethical representation. For gender representation, this approach may offer an alternative to embedding gender directly in authority records. By referencing public data from reliable sources with documented provenance and update histories, institutions can support more transparent maintenance of gender-related statements and other attributes over time.

Thompson (2016) reinforces this perspective by highlighting that recording gender within authority records particularly through MARC field 375 poses significant risks related to privacy breaches, non-consensual disclosure, and the reinforcement of cis-normative frameworks. She advocates for a shift toward linked data practices, where identity information is managed through persistent identifiers, allowing individuals greater control over how they are represented. Systems like ORCID exemplify this model, offering users the ability to manage their own identity metadata with granular privacy settings. Also argues that cataloguers should critically assess whether including gender is truly necessary for information retrieval, always prioritizing consent and the prevention of harm.

The adoption of semantic web technologies and semantic enrichment practices can be a technical advancement for authority records and an ethical transformation in managing identity attributes, particularly gender. This moves authority control from rigid, closed metadata models to open, flexible, and community-driven frameworks that support greater inclusivity, interoperability, and respect for self-identification. By leveraging linked data sources such as Wikidata, VIAF, and ORCID, may offer pathways for self-identification and ongoing updates. This approach aligns with broader changes in bibliographic control, fostering transparency, autonomy, and sustainability while reducing the risks of harm, misrepresentation, and the reinforcement of normative biases in cataloguing systems.

3. Methodology

From the perspective of its objective, this study is classified as descriptive and exploratory, as it seeks to identify, characterize, and analyze how gender metadata is implemented in national libraries' authority records. According to Gil (2008), descriptive research aims to identify and describe the characteristics of a given phenomenon or population, while exploratory research seeks to provide greater familiarity with a problem, making it clearer and enabling the formulation of hypotheses (Prodanov and Freitas 2013). This combined approach enables the investigation of gender representation practices from multiple angles. In terms of its nature, the study adopts an analytical-descriptive orientation, grounded in empirical observation and institutional documentation.

The study employs a qualitative approach and uses bibliographic and documentary research methods. Bibliographic research is based on the analysis of previously published materials, such as books and academic articles. Documentary research, in turn, involves diverse and dispersed sources, including institutional reports, technical standards, and official documents that may not yet have undergone in-depth analytical treatment. As Gil (2008) highlights, both strategies con-

tribute to understanding the current state of knowledge on the topic and provide a solid theoretical foundation.

The inclusion criteria considered studies available in full text, published in Portuguese, English, or Spanish, between 2000 and 2024, to ensure the incorporation of contemporary and relevant research. To guarantee the breadth and quality of the selected literature, databases widely recognized in the field of Library and Information Science were consulted, including the Base de Dados Referenciais de Artigos de Periódicos em Ciência da Informação (BRAPCI),⁵ the CAPES Portal of Journals,⁶ Library and Information Science Abstracts (LISA),⁷ Web of Science,⁸ Scopus,⁹ and the Scientific Electronic Library Online (SciELO).¹⁰

Based on the descriptive and exploratory nature of the study, national libraries from the Americas and Europe were identified using the continental classification available on IFLA National Libraries database and Wikipedia¹¹ as an initial reference. Data collection involved the analysis of personal name authority records available in public library catalogues, complemented by direct contact via email with the respective institutions. The purpose of this contact was to verify whether gender metadata was included in their authority records, to understand whether they used specific fields for recording gender, and how this information was being registered. Formal emails were sent to the selected institutions to request official information about their policies and practices regarding the inclusion of gender metadata in authority records.

In the empirical analysis, one authority record was examined for each institution. The selected records correspond to the authors Agatha Christie, J. L. Butler, Jane Austen, Lola Anglada, and Virginia Woolf, chosen due to their wide presence across authority databases and their representativeness in diverse historical, cultural, and linguistic contexts. In total, thirteen records from thirteen national libraries were analyzed, corresponding to the institutions that confirmed the inclusion of gender metadata in their authority records. The aim was to obtain institutional positions, not personal opinions. The responses were treated as official statements, providing complementary insights to the analysis of public authority catalogues.

From the thirteen libraries identified, four authority catalogues were randomly selected to illustrate how gender metadata is represented in practice. The selection was made randomly among these institutions.

4. Results and discussion

After completing the data collection and contacting the national libraries, the institutions that confirmed the use of gender metadata in their authority records were organized in Table 1. The

⁵ <https://brapci.inf.br/home>

⁶ <https://www.periodicos.capes.gov.br/>

⁷ <https://about.proquest.com/en/products-services/lisa-set-c>

⁸ <https://www.webofscience.com/wos/woscc/basic-search>

⁹ <https://www.scopus.com/sources>

¹⁰ <https://www.scielo.br/>

¹¹ Classification of National Libraries on Wikipedia: https://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Biblioteca_nacional.

table was divided into two groups: national libraries from the Americas and from Europe.¹² The practices adopted, considering three main elements: the field and subfield used to record gender; the values adopted to represent this information; and the institutional decisions that guide or justify the use of this metadata. The systematization of this information enables an understanding of how metadata standards and descriptive schemas are interpreted and applied by each library, as well as the degree of alignment or adaptation to international guidelines, local policies, and ongoing ethical discussions surrounding the representation of gender identity in authority records.

Table 1. Gender Metadata Implementation in Authority Records of National Libraries

AMERICAS				
Library	Country	Field and sub-field used	Values	Practice on gender recording
National Library Mariano Moreno	Argentina	MARC 21 field 375 Subfield \$a	Woman Man Trans woman Trans man Intersex Travesti Non-binary Other Unspecified	Records gender and has expanded the set of values.
National Library of Colombia	Colombia	MARC 21 field 375 Subfield \$a	Female Male Unknown	Implemented, in 2021, the use of MARC 21 field 375 to record the gender of authors in authority records, following the guidelines established in RDA.
National Library of Mexico	Mexico	MARC 21 field 375 Subfield \$a	Female Male	Gender is recorded as either female or male, and the “unknown” option is not used. In cases where the author identifies with another gender, a non-controlled or transcribed term from the consulted source is recorded.
National Library of Peru	Peru	MARC 21 field 375 Subfield \$a	Female Male	Follows the guidelines of the Manual for the control of authority data for people, based on RDA. Although there is a policy supporting the identification, retrieval, and gender grouping of authors, internal policy determines that this information is not publicly displayed in the authority catalogue.

¹² The American group comprises the National Library of Argentina (Biblioteca Nacional de la República Argentina), the National Library of Colombia (Biblioteca Nacional de Colombia), the National Library of Mexico (Biblioteca Nacional de México), and the National Library of Peru (Biblioteca Nacional de Perú). The European group includes the National Library of France (Bibliothèque Nationale de France – BnF), the Royal Library of Belgium, the National Library of Iceland (Landsbókasafn Íslands – Háskólabókasafn), the National Library of Norway (Nasjonalbiblioteket), the National Library of the Czech Republic (Národní knihovna České republiky), the National Library of Spain (Biblioteca Nacional de España – BNE) and the German National Library (Deutsche Nationalbibliothek – DNB).

EUROPE				
Library	Country	Field and sub-field used	Values	Practice on gender recording
National Library of Germany	Germany	MARC 21 field 375 Subfield \$a	F (female) M (male)	Uses only the ISO 5218 codes: “m” (male) and “f” (female), with no specific option for other gender identities, as codes “0” (unknown) and “9” (not applicable) are not considered appropriate.
Royal Library of Belgium	Belgium	MARC 21 field 375 Subfield \$a	Female Male Unknown	Follows the guidelines established in the RDA.
National Library of Catalonia	Spain – Catalonia	MARC 21 field 375 Subfield \$a	Female Male	Follows the RDA guidelines. In CANTIC, this field is optional and depends on the policy of the contributing institution. There is no standardized list of gender identities. When necessary, a term from a controlled vocabulary may be used.
National Library of Spain	Spain	MARC 21 field 375 Subfield \$a	Female Male	Uses field 375 with the values “Male” and “Female” (other values are not applied).
National Library of Slovenia	Slovenia	COMARC/A field 120 subfield \$a	a (female) b (male) c (transgender) n (unspecified or not determined)	In the COBISS system, the COMARC/A format is used for authority records, based on UNIMARC/A. Gender is recorded in field 120\$a.
National Library of France	France	INTERMARC field 008 (position 17) UNIMARC field 120 subfield \$a	F (female) M (male) # (not informed) a (female) b (male)	Data is produced in INTERMARC and also disclosed in UNIMARC. In INTERMARC, gender is recorded in position 17 of field 008, using the values: <i>f</i> (female), <i>m</i> (male), and # (not informed). In UNIMARC, the information appears in field 120 \$a.
National Library of Iceland	Iceland	MARC 21 field 375 Subfield \$a	Female Male Other	The values used are “male,” “female,” and “other.” If there is uncertainty about which value to use, the field is not included in the authority record.
National Library of Norway	Norway	MARC 21 field 375 Subfield \$a	F (female) M (male)	Accepted values for subfield \$a are “f” (female) and “m” (male). The field is repeatable and, in cases of gender transition, subfields \$s (start date) and \$t (end date) can be used to indicate the period of identification with a specific gender.
National Library of the Czech Republic	Czech Republic	MARC 21 field 375 Subfield \$a	Female Male	The values are “Male” and “Female.” Other values are not contemplated.

The National Libraries of Czech Republic,¹³ Mexico, Norway, Peru, and Spain follow similar practices by using MARC 21 field 375, subfield \$a, restricted to the binary values “Female” and “Male”. Mexico does not use the “Unknown” value and allows cataloguers to add a non-controlled or transcribed term when the person identifies outside the binary. In Norway, the field is repeatable and allows the use of subfields \$s (start date) and \$t (end date) to indicate periods of gender identification, especially in cases of gender transition. In Peru, although gender is recorded, the information is not displayed publicly due to internal policies focused on privacy and data ethics.

The National Libraries of Colombia and Belgium apply a slightly broader model. Both are aligned with RDA guidelines, using the values “Female”, “Male”, and “Unknown”.

The National Library of Iceland adopts a more open approach, using MARC 21, field 375, subfield \$a, with the values “Female”, “Male”, and “Other”. When uncertainty exists regarding which value to assign, the field is left blank.

The National Library of Catalonia¹⁴ applies the same field and subfield. In the CANTIC cooperative catalogue, this field is optional and depends on the policy of each contributing institution. There is no standardized list of gender identities, however, when needed, terms from controlled vocabularies may be applied.

The National Library Mariano Moreno (Argentina) demonstrates one of the most comprehensive and inclusive approaches. It uses MARC 21 field 375, subfield \$a, and adopts an expanded set of values beyond the binary. This practice reflects an institutional decision¹⁵ to promote diversity and visibility for gender-diverse identities within authority data.

National Library of Germany uses MARC 21, field 375, subfield \$a, with ISO 5218 codes “m” (male) and “f” (female). There is no option for identities beyond the binary, as codes “0” (unknown) and “9” (not applicable) are considered inappropriate and are not used.

In contrast, the National Library of Slovenia, which adopts the COMARC/A format, records gender in field 120, subfield \$a, with the values “a” (female), “b” (male), “c” (transgender), and “n” (unspecified or not determined).

Finally, the National Library of France uses both INTERMARC and UNIMARC. In INTERMARC, gender is recorded in position 17 of field 008 with values “f” (female), “m” (male), and “#” (not informed). In UNIMARC,¹⁶ the same information appears in field 120, subfield \$a, using “a” (female) and “b” (male).

This analysis reveals that the inclusion of gender metadata in authority records is not simply a technical decision but one that reflects deeper institutional values, ethical considerations, and differing interpretations of metadata standards. While some libraries adopt a strictly binary framework, others demonstrate incremental steps toward more inclusive models.

To illustrate how gender metadata has been applied in authority records, the following section presents examples of records for the author Jane Austen in selected national library catalogues.

¹³ Institutional practice from the National Library of Czech Republic: <https://authority.nkp.cz/jmenne-autority/metodicka-materialy/metodika-jmena-cvicne-2#pole375>.

¹⁴ Institutional practice from the National Library of Catalonia: <https://www.bnc.cat/sprof/normalitzacio/marc21a/a1xx.htm#Auto375>.

¹⁵ Institutional practice from the National Library Mariano Moreno: <https://escritoriop.bn.gov.ar/mcat/mcata-3XX.html>.

¹⁶ Institutional practice from the National Library of France: <https://www.transition-bibliographique.fr/unimarc/formats-unimarc/>.

The choice of this author is based on her widespread presence across various authority databases, as well as her significance in diverse historical, cultural, and linguistic contexts.

4.1 Gender Metadata in Personal Name Authority Records

The National Library Mariano Moreno (BNMM) of Argentina uses the MARC 21 format in its authority records. Figure 1 shows the authority record for the author Jane Austen, where the presence of field 375, designated for recording gender, can be observed. This field reflects the institution's policy of adopting expanded and more inclusive vocabularies to represent gender identities, aligning with practices that promote greater diversity and visibility in bibliographic representation.¹⁷

FMT	AU
LDR	cz a22 n 4500
001	000021711
003	AR-BaBN
005	20221201132756.0
008	790418n acannaabn b aaa
0247	1a 102333412 2 viaf 1 http://viaf.org/viaf/102333412
040	1a DLC b eng c DLC d DLC d CIY-BR d OCoLC d DLC-R d SG-SIILA d OCoLC d DLC d CST d UPB d AR-BaBN
043	1a e-uk-en
046	f 17751216 g 18170718
1001	1a Austen, Jane, d 1775-1817
370	1a Steventon (Hampshire, Inglaterra) b Winchester (Inglaterra) e Bath (Inglaterra)
374	1a Autores
375	1a Mujer ←
377	1a eng l inglés
4001	1a Ostin, Dzhein, d 1775-1817
4000	1a Ao-ssu-ting, d 1775-1817
4000	1a Aosiding, d 1775-1817
4001	1a Ao-ssu-ting, Chien, d 1775-1817
4001	1a Aosiding, Jian, d 1775-1817
4001	1a Austenová , Jane, d 1775-1817
670	1a Wikipedia, via WWW, Feb. 8, 2012: b (n. dic. 16, 1775 en Steventon, Hampshire; m. 18 jul. 1817 en Winchester, Hampshire; novelista inglesa; 1800 se traslada a Bath)
670	1a Persuación, 1978.
6780	1a Nació en 1775 y falleció en 1817, en su hogar contaba con una biblioteca privada que la sumergió en la lectura, su talento como escritora aflora en su adolescencia, fué una destacada novelista británica. Algunas de sus obras son llevadas al cine. La mayoría de sus obras aparecen bajo seudónimo.

Figure 1. Authority record for the author Jane Austen in the BNMM

¹⁷ The BNMM adopted fields 370, 372, 373, 374, 375, and 377 to enrich personal name authority records. Initially, field 375 was limited to the values “Masculino” (Male) and “Femenino” (Female), based on ISO standards. During the pandemic, the institution launched a campaign to collect biographical data directly from authors, prioritizing self-reported information. Guided by the policies of Argentina’s Ministry of Women, the Gender Commission proposed expanding the terms used for gender. Despite the RDA working groups recommending the removal of field 375 due to privacy concerns, the BNMM maintains its use based on Argentina’s Personal Data Protection Law, which permits the processing of this data when authorized by the individual or obtained from public sources. The Authority Control Division argues that including gender metadata supports the analysis of bibliographic production by gender and fosters new research perspectives.

Among the various fields displayed, field 375 subfield \$a stands out, indicating the gender of the described entity with the value “Mujer” (Female). Field 100 presents the authorized name; 370 records the places associated with the author; and field 374 indicates her occupation. Additionally, field 377 specifies the language associated, while fields 400 and 500 list variants of the author’s name. Field 670 contains external references, including Wikipedia, and field 678 holds a biographical note highlighting Jane Austen’s relevance as a writer.

It is also possible to observe the application of semantic techniques that contribute to the interoperability of authority data. A key indicator of this practice is field 0247, which contains a VIAF identifier linked to the described entity. This field establishes a semantic link between the local authority record and an international authority base, allowing interoperable systems to recognize and reuse the information automatically.

4.2 German National Library

Figure 2 presents the authority record for Jane Austen in the catalogue of the German National Library (DNB), within the Gemeinsame Normdatei (GND). According to the information provided by the library, the use of field 375 is optional. The field “Geschlecht” (Gender) is populated with “weiblich” (female), demonstrating the library’s practice of recording this information.

Link zu diesem Datensatz	https://d-nb.info/gnd/118505173
Person	Austen, Jane
Geschlecht	weiblich 
Andere Namen	Aosiding (Chines.) Aosiding, Jian Ao-ssu-ting, Chien Ao-ssu-ting Austenová, Jane Austenové, Jane Austenová Jane Awsten, Jeyn (Uigur.) Osten, Dzhein Остен, Жейн Ostin, Dzhein (Russ. Namensform, AACR) Ostin, Džejn (Russ. Namensform, RAK-WB) Ostin, Zhejn Остин, Жейн Ostjen, Zhjejn 奧斯汀 (Schriftcode: Hans) 奧斯婷 (Chinesische Namensform (Transkription um 1950)) (Schriftcode: Hant) 珍·奧斯婷 (Chinesische Namensform (Transkription um 1950)) (Schriftcode: Hant) 简·奧斯汀 (Chinesische Namensform (Transkription wikipedia, Zugriff: 18.05.2021)) (Schriftcode: Hans) 簡·奧斯汀 (Chinesische Namensform (Transkription wikipedia, Zugriff: 18.05.2021)) (Schriftcode: Hant)
Quelle	M B 1986 Kröner Weltlit. LCAuth Wikipedia (Stand: 09.03.2023): https://de.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Jane_Austen&oldid=231601159
Zeit	Lebensdaten: 1775-1817
Land	Großbritannien (XA-GB)
Sprache(n)	Englisch (eng)
Geografischer Bezug	Geburtsort: Steventon (Hampshire) Sterbeort: Winchester Wirkungsort: Bath
Beruf(e)	Schriftstellerin Librettistin

Figure 2. Authority record for the author Jane Austen in the DNB

The library's catalogue incorporates Semantic Web technologies, allowing records to be exported in RDF Turtle format. This approach integrates authority data into the Linked Data environment, promoting interoperability and connectivity across various data sources. Such implementation reflects how authority catalogues are adapting to semantic environments, enhancing both the representation and retrieval of more contextualized information. Part of the same record, encoded in MARC 21 XML, is shown in Figure 3, highlighting how the data is structured according to this standard.

Figure 3. Authority record in MARCXML for the author Jane Austen in the DNB

4.3 National Library of Spain

```

608ender 01128c3aa220829m 4500
609 00106088189448608e
610 005 2024880112296e, 0
611 001120m aljainadn n aaa
612 016 #a$R#S199001622556
613 75ahttps://xlaaf.org/xlaaf/102323412/ 32ziarf
614 75ahttps://data.cervantesvirtual.com/perseus/471
615 75ahttps://mini.org/ini/000000012036355 32ziari
616 75ahttps://www.wikidata.org/wiki/S19312 32wikidati
617 035 #a$a$(p$uM)X11124986
618 040 #a$a$(p$uM sc$cp$uM serdc f$embnne
619 #a$1775 35i187
620 1$faAusten, Jane 0d1775-1817
621 #a$a$Veronica SwWikidati
622 #a$a$facição p$ica s$aNovela romantica SwWikidati
623 #a$a$novelistas s$aEscritores SwWikidati
624 #a$a$feminino ←
625 #a$ingles
626 #a$aSentido y sensibilidad, 2014 $p$ort. (Jane Austen)
627 #a$a$Ruño y prejuicio, 1998 $p$ort. (Jane Austen)
628 #a$aM B, 2-4-2014 $b$(SwAusten; Jane 1775-1817)
629 #a$aWikipedia, 2-4-2014 $b$(Jane Austen); n- 16-12-1775 en Steventon-on-, 18-7-1817, Winchester; novelista británica contada entre los

```

Field 375 records the author's gender as "Femenino." Field 100 contains the authorized name with birth and death dates. Field 372 identifies intellectual areas of activity, and 374 specifies professional roles. Field 377 indicates the language of the author's work, while field 670 lists information sources used in the record, such as Wikipedia and the British Library. Field 024 includes external identifiers from VIAF, ISNI, and Wikidata, demonstrating the use of Semantic Web techniques.

These identifiers enhance interoperability, visibility, and data reuse across linked data environments.¹⁸

4.4 National Library of France

Next, Figure 5 presents the authority record in the UNIMARC format in the catalogue of the National Library of France.

```
000 cx a22 45
001 FRBNF11889603X
003 http://catalogue.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb118896036
005 20181106
010 .. $a 000000012283635X $2 VIAF $d 20130724
039 .. $o OPL $a 001573266 $z AMA
039 .. $o OPL $a 000419322 $z APP
039 .. $o OPP $a 14871547 $d 20070226
039 .. $o OPP $a 15447424 $d 20121008
100 .. $a 19771109afrey50 ba0
101 .. $a eng
102 .. $a GB
103 .. $a 17751216 18170718
105 .. $a a
106 .. $a 010
120 .. $a a ←
152 .. $c 2
200 .I $7 ba0yba0y $8 fre $9 0 $a Austen $b Jane $f 1775-1817
300 .I. $a Romancière
301 .. $a Steventon (Royaume-Uni) $b Winchester (Royaume-Uni)
801 .. $a FR $b FR-751131015 $c 20181106
810 .. $a Pride and prejudice : a novel / by Jane Austen, 1870 $a Northanger Abbey / Jane Austen ; edited by Barbara M. Benedict and Deirdre Le Faye, 2006
810 .. $a British library - http://catalogue.bl.uk (2011-10-05) $a Oxford English lit., 1991
810 .. $a BN Cat. gén. $a BN Cat. gén. suppl. $a BN Cat. gén. 1960-1969
856 .. $u http://catalogue.bl.uk $e 2011-10-05
```

Figure 5. Authority record in UNIMARC for the author Jane Austen in the BNF

In UNIMARC gender is recorded in field 120, subfield \$a, with the value “a,” which represents female. Field 100 contains the control number, 103 the date of birth, 102 the country code (e.g., GB), and 101 the language code (e.g., a for English). Field 200 shows the authorized name form, and 300 indicates occupation. Field 801 identifies the record’s creator, here the Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF). Field 856 links to a digital source, such as the British Library catalogue. Fields 810 and 820 list additional consulted sources. Figure 6 presents the same record in INTERMARC format as maintained by the BnF.

¹⁸ According to information provided by the BNE via email, the library conducted a retrospective analysis of its authority records to apply the gender field (375) on a large scale, using the values “Masculino” (male) and “Femenino” (female), without considering other gender identities. Since then, cataloguers have routinely included this information in newly created records. The retrospective process was automated and involved several strategies, such as detecting terms within records that might indicate gender (e.g., *papa*, *rey*, *condesa*), comparing personal names with gendered name lists from the Instituto Nacional de Estadística (INE) of Spain, integrating data from VIAF for foreign authors, and cross-referencing information with Wikidata.

```
000 00778c1 ap22000272 45
001 FRBNF11889603X
008 771109181106gbngf 17751216 18170718 a 010
031 . $a 000000012283635X $2 VIAF $d 20130724
045 . $a a
100 . $w .O.b..... $a Austen $m Jane
600 . $a Romancière
603 . $a Steventon (Royaume-Uni) $b Winchester (Royaume-Uni)
610 . $a Pride and prejudice : a novel / by Jane Austen, 1870 $a Northanger Abbey / Jane Austen ; edited by Barbara M. Benedict and Deirdre Le Faye, 2006
610 . $a British library $u http://catalogue.bl.uk $d 2011-10-05 $a Oxford English lit., 1991
610 . $a BN Cat. gén. $a BN Cat. gén. suppl. $a BN Cat. gén. 1960-1969
917 . $o OPL $a 001573266 $b AMA
917 . $o OPL $a 000419322 $b APP
996 . $o OPP $a 14871547 $d 20070226
996 . $o OPP $a 15447424 $d 20121008
```

Figure 6. Authority record in INTERMARC for the author Jane Austen in the BNF

The authority record for the author Jane Austen, as shown in Figure 6, records gender in field 008, position 17, with the value “f” (female). The presence of field 031, which links the record to VIAF, indicates the application of Semantic Web techniques within the catalogue. This linkage enables interoperability with other databases and reinforces the system’s alignment with Linked Data practices. The inclusion of persistent identifiers and the normalization of access points demonstrate that even within a national format like INTERMARC, the BnF implements mechanisms that support the semantic enrichment of authority records particularly using URIs and connections to internationally recognized external sources.

The analysis of gender representation in authority records across national libraries shows that metadata inclusion reflects a combination of technical decisions, institutional values, ethical concerns, and sociocultural contexts. Libraries adopt varied approaches: some apply only binary values, others introduce broader categories, and some choose to suppress public display of gender data to protect privacy.

These findings echo concerns in the literature that traditional cataloguing frameworks based on rigid data models and predefined Fields struggle to represent complex identity attributes like gender (Adolpho 2019; PCC 2022). Fields such as MARC 375, though designed for this purpose, often reinforce binary or normative classifications that have been increasingly questioned in academic and professional discussions.

This debate is closely linked to Semantic Web principles, Linked Data, and semantic enrichment. These technologies allow authority records to transcend static formats by linking to persistent identifiers (URIs) such as ORCID, VIAF, and Wikidata. This not only enhances interoperability, discoverability, and data accuracy, but also supports individual control over identity data, as advocated by Thompson (2016).

Some national libraries rely on trusted and publicly available sources to determine gender information when it is recorded in authority records. This includes bibliographic references, biographical dictionaries, encyclopedias, and structured linked data sources such as Wikidata and VIAF. These external sources are considered reliable, community-maintained, and aligned with international standards, providing persistent identifiers (URIs) that ensure the accuracy, traceability, and interoperability of the information. When libraries choose to connect their authority records to these datasets, they are not only enhancing metadata quality but also reinforcing ethical practices, since the data is derived from open and verifiable resources. Cataloguing decisions remain guided by ethical frameworks like the IFLA’s Cataloguing Principles (PIC) and the Cataloguing Code of Ethics. Those support interoperability and address concerns about privacy violations, misclassifi-

cation, and the reinforcement of binary gender norms. Ultimately, combining semantic technologies with ethical cataloguing practices leads to more flexible, interconnected, and person-centered authority data.

It requires significant changes in cataloguing workflows, technical infrastructure, and, fundamentally, in the professional mindset regarding authority control. As Possemato (2025) observes, the transformation toward entity-based models and semantic enrichment demands a redefinition of the role of cataloguers not merely as enforcers of data standards, but as mediators of ethical, inclusive, and context-sensitive metadata practices.

The discussion around gender metadata in authority records is far from resolved. It represents an ongoing discussion between the needs for data consistency, ethical responsibility, and the recognition of gender diversity. Moving forward, it is imperative that libraries continue to engage with community-driven initiatives, update their policies to reflect evolving standards, and prioritize approaches that safeguard privacy while promoting equitable representation in the bibliographic universe.

Conclusion

This study shows a range of institutional approaches shaped by metadata standards and cataloguing policies around identity representation. Some institutions adopt inclusive vocabularies that acknowledge gender diversity, while others retain binary models or choose to suppress gender metadata in public catalogues to protect individual privacy. These differences reflect ongoing debates on the role of personal name authority records whether they should record identity attributes or adapt to more fluid, socially constructed understandings of identity.

In this context, semantic technologies can offer viable solutions to enhance metadata practices. By linking authority records to open, persistent identifiers in publicly available and reliable sources like VIAF, Wikidata, and ORCID, libraries can improve accuracy, ensure interoperability, and support personal autonomy. This approach helps mitigate the risks of outdated or incorrect information while aligning with principles of consent, privacy, and inclusivity.

When carefully managed, gender-related metadata can support research, improve data, improve data quality, and acknowledge contributions to cultural and scientific production. However, its presence must always be balanced with privacy concerns and only included when publicly available, verifiable, and consistent with the individual's self-identification.

In light of the findings, it becomes imperative for national libraries and cataloguing institutions to critically assess the ethical dimensions of gender representation in NARs. While the possibility of recording gender information has long existed within the MARC21 authority format most notably through fields such as 375 (Gender), what is now being proposed is not merely the inclusion of this data, but a critical revision of how it is collected, structured, and exposed. This involves moving away from inferential, binary, and static models toward approaches grounded in consent, self-identification, and ongoing revision. Beyond adopting inclusive descriptive standards and metadata schemas, institutions must reevaluate cataloguing codes and controlled vocabularies to better reflect the complexity and fluidity of gender identities. This includes implementing mechanisms for user consent, enabling updates to authority records based on individual agency,

and developing ethical policies that prevent the reinforcement of normative classifications or the inadvertent outing of individuals. By embedding ethical review and participatory frameworks into authority control workflows, libraries can advance toward a more inclusive, respectful, and socially responsible bibliographic infrastructure.

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