Authority records: ambiguous headings

Ambiguous headings are identical "See from" terms that appear in more than one authority record. The best known example of an ambiguous heading is ALA, which is a legitimate "See from" heading in eleven authority records in HOLLIS. Because the headings are identical only one index entry is currently created for ALA, and the heading displays with only one "See" reference in both the OPAC and the client.

In version 18, Aleph is able to identify ambiguous headings and provides a mechanism for changing them into distinct headings. When the system determines that a "See from" heading in either HVD10 or HVD12 already exists in another authority record, the "See" heading is copied from the 1XX field and appended to the ambiguous heading in a subfield 7. Applying subfield 7 to the authority record for African Literature Association changes the ambiguous heading 4101 $$aALA into 4101 $$aALA$$7African Literature Association.

Other ambiguous headings:

4000 $$aPlato.$$tApology of Socrates
4000 $$aPlato.$$tApology of Socrates$$7Plato. Apology
4000 $$aPlato.$$tApology of Socrates$$7Plato. Apology. English

4112 $$aConference on Women, World
4112 $$aConference on Women, World$$7World Conference on Women

430 0 $$aAA
430 0 $$aAA$$7Agriculture d'aujourd'hui
430 0 $$aAA$$7Arte e archeologia

450 0 $$aBadges of honor
450 0 $$aBadges of honor$$7Insignia
450 0 $$aBadges of honor$$7Medals

450 $$aDeliveries
450 $$aDeliveries$$7Delivery, Obstetric
450 $$aDeliveries$$7Delivery

With subfield 7 applied, each instance of ALA displays on a separate line in both the OPAC and client. Subfield 7 is enclosed in square brackets in the client display.

+ ALA [African Literature Association.]
+ ALA [American Laryngological Association]
+ ALA [American Library Association]
In the OPAC, the subfield 7 content is suppressed to create this display:

ALA - [Heading Information]  
See: African Literature Association

ALA - [Heading Information]  
See: American Laryngological Association

ALA - [Heading Information]  
See: American Library Association

Subfield 7 and automated correction of bibliographic headings in Aleph

Machine processes are not capable of determining which preferred term should be substituted for ALA when it is used as a corporate name entry in a bibliographic record; only a cataloger can make that judgment based on the subject matter of the work. If ambiguous headings remain in the authority file and ALA in a 410 were used to correct a bibliographic record containing ALA in a 710, the system might replace ALA with American Library Association, when it should be replaced with African Literature Association.

Adding subfield 7 prevents the Aleph automated bibliographic heading correction process from changing ALA to the incorrect preferred term. ALA in field 110 or 710 of a bibliographic record will match and link to ALA in a 410 field in an authority record. When subfield 7 is added and the authority heading changes from 4101 $$aALA to 4101 $$aALAS$$7American Library Association the bibliographic and authority headings no longer match and therefore automatic update of the bibliographic heading cannot occur.

How subfield 7 works

Subfield 7 is applied when authority records in HVD10 or HVD12 undergo indexing. The system determines that an incoming heading is ambiguous when it matches an existing heading in the GEN index. All 1XX and 4XX headings in the authority record are checked and subfield 7 is applied in the following conditions:

- If the incoming heading in a 1XX field matches an existing heading in a 4XX field, subfield 7 is applied to the existing 4XX heading.
- If the incoming heading in a 4XX field matches to an existing 1XX field, subfield 7 is applied to the incoming 4XX heading.
- Lastly, if the incoming heading in a 4XX field matches an existing 4XX heading, subfield 7 is applied to both headings.

Subfield 7 is never applied to headings in 1XX or 5XX fields.
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Subfield 7 and duplicate, cancelled or superseded authority records

In cataloging terms the function of subfield 7 is more accurately described as making duplicate non-preferred headings into unique headings. The functionality cannot distinguish between incoming 4XX headings that are ambiguous (i.e., where the 4XX headings match but the 1XX headings are different), and incoming 4XX headings that are duplicates because the authority record already exists in the database. If a duplicate authority record is added to HVD10 or HVD12 (whether manually, via OCLC export, or through the MARS batch load) all 4XX headings in the incoming authority record will acquire subfield 7 when the record is indexed.

To notify catalogers of ambiguous/duplicate headings when creating or editing an authority record in Aleph, new duplicate detection functionality has been implemented in HVD10 and HVD12. When ‘Save to Server’ is selected the new function checks 1XX and 4XX headings in the GEN index. If any matches are found a ‘Record Check Warnings/Errors’ box appears that specifies the duplicate heading, and provides the system number of the other authority record in which it was found.

To view the authority record with the heading, select Cancel on the Record Check Warnings box. The validation error message will then display in the lower pane in the Messages tab; selecting the message text will activate the button labeled ‘View Related’ on the right.

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Select the split screen icon and click on ‘View Related’ to bring up the other authority record for side-by-side comparison. Headings in the other authority record can be checked for duplication as well by making it the active pane, and selecting the ‘Check Record’ icon.

If the headings are valid and the records with ambiguous headings are saved to the server, subfield 7 will be applied to them during indexing. When the records are moved back into the cataloging editor after being indexed, the subfield 7 will be present in each record.

If investigation of the validation error message reveals a duplicate authority record, a new record with the same 1XX should not be created; additional notes or cross-references can be added to the existing record.
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If an invalid authority record is discovered or improper use is made of the duplicate heading in the existing authority record, the problem should be resolved locally if possible (most cataloging units have at least one person authorized to delete authority records).

NOTE: Once subfield 7 is added, it can not be removed except by staff at OIS. The behavior has been reported as a bug to our system vendor, but since its effects are not significant in the public display, the decision was made to go forward with subfield 7 implementation.

If a duplicate authority record or a duplicate heading is accidentally added to the database and subfield 7 needs to be removed, send the request to OIS using the Database Management: Headings Problems form on the Aleph Support site (http://hul.harvard.edu/ois/systems/aleph/forms/f-supp-dbm-headings.html)

Index of Ambiguous headings

Ambiguous or duplicate headings that have subfield 7 are listed in a browse index called Ambiguous Headings. The index includes headings from any 4XX field that has a subfield 7. Subfield 7 is stripped from the heading when it is indexed in the Ambiguous headings index.

The number in the # Docs column shows how many authority records have the 4XX heading. If a heading has only 1 document attached, it is either a duplicate of a 1XX heading, or a heading where the other instance has been deleted, but the subfield 7 hasn’t been removed. Database Management staff at OIS will be reviewing ambiguous headings with a single posting to resolve situations where a 4XX heading duplicates a 1XX heading.

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