

PCC Task Group on Required Contributions to the PCC

Preliminary Report

Submitted to PCC Policy Committee
September 15, 2022

Introduction

At the PCC Policy Committee (PoCo) Virtual Annual meeting in November 2021, PoCo identified the need to review existing policies regarding contribution requirements for PCC members. These annual minimum standards were adopted in 2003 for two reasons: in order to justify the cost of training, documentation, and program support by both the PCC and the member library and to maintain expertise and currency in cataloging.

It is necessary to reevaluate these standards because of changes that have happened in the past two decades—including the changing nature of cataloging work, the increased focus of the PCC on valuing work beyond catalog records, and the desire to expand and diversify membership—and because of existing non-compliance and lack of enforcement. There are three distinct groups of institutions that may benefit from this reevaluation: current members who do not contribute or do not meet the existing requirements; current members who are not reporting their contributions; and libraries that currently are not members because of the production requirements.

The task group was charged in May 2022, and met five times prior to submitting this preliminary report.

Current Requirements

The production requirements are specified in the [Governance Document](#):

- NACO: large-library members (all ARL and national libraries) must contribute at least 200 new or modified authority records annually; small-library members must contribute at least 100 new or modified authority records annually.
- SACO: all members must contribute at least 12 new or changed subject proposals annually.
- BIBCO: all members must contribute at least 100 newly authenticated or modified bibliographic records annually.
- CONSER: full-level members must contribute at least 200 newly authenticated or modified bibliographic records annually; associate-level members must contribute at least 100 newly authenticated or modified bibliographic records annually; enhance-level members must contribute at least 50 modified bibliographic records annually.

An institution that cannot fulfill the requirements of membership in a program may join a program funnel. Funnel membership is also extended to institutions that are already program members but wish to join a subject, language, or format community of catalogers. Members of program funnels and program funnels themselves do not have any production requirements.

According to the Governance Document, institutions who have either low production or low quality of work are identified by the PCC Secretariat for review by the PCC Steering Committee.

There are two notification times for institutions not meeting production requirements:

- Institutions that have not met production requirements for the past two years will be encouraged to contribute more or to join a funnel to retain membership.
- Institutions that have not met production requirements for the past three years will be notified that they are no longer members and will need to reapply and retrain to participate again.

Production requirements are evaluated based on self-reported statistics submitted by each member. Production requirements do not apply to funnel project members. Program independence is granted only to funnel project coordinators or to funnel project members at the discretion of the funnel coordinator.

Current Contributions

Many PCC members report no contributions. It is not possible to know whether these institutions are not contributing anything or whether they are not reporting their contributions. In the 2021 fiscal year for Library of Congress (LC), which started October 2020 and ended September 2021, reported statistics were:

- NACO: of 718 members, 417 (58%) reported no contributions, of which 114 (16%) were full members; 113 (16%) reported fewer than 100 contributions and 51 (7%) reported fewer than 200 contributions.
- SACO: of 117 members, 68 (58%) reported no contributions, of which 42 (36%) were full members, and 89 (76%) reported fewer than 12 contributions; 57 (72%) of the 79 full members reported contributing less than the requirement.
- BIBCO: of 99 members, 27 (27%) reported no contributions, of which 14 (14%) were full members, and 28 (28%) reported fewer than 100 contributions; 30 (43%) of the 70 full members reported contributing less than the requirement.
- CONSER: of 77 members, 23 (30%) reported no contributions, of which 15 (19%) were full-level, associate-level, or enhance-level members; 14 (52%) of the 27 full-level members, 16 (73%) of the 22 associate-level members, and 10 (83%) of the 12 enhance-level members reported contributing less than the requirements.

While the number of members in the programs is increasing, so is the number of members reporting no contributions. In the 2020 fiscal year, of 689 NACO members, 378 (55%) reported no contributions, of which 113 (16%) were full members. Although the COVID-19 pandemic may have influenced statistics for 2020, this trend was also evident in prior years. In the 2019 fiscal

year, of 665 NACO members, 303 (46%) reported no contributions, of which 95 (14%) were full members.

Assuming that some of the participants reporting no contributions have made unreported contributions, and that with new members every year some of the participants not meeting the requirements are new to that program, a significant proportion of members are not contributing what is expected of them.

Purposes of Required Contributions

The task group affirmed that the two purposes for requiring contributions that were identified in 2003 remain relevant, but it also agreed that there are additional types of contributions that members can make that currently are not recognized but would be beneficial to track.

There are significant costs to maintaining the PCC, mostly through staff time. LC provides staff to form the Secretariat, which manages the administrative work of the PCC. For other members, although membership is free, there are non-monetary costs in addition to the staff time spent doing cataloging work. Training for new members requires up-to-date documentation and a trainer's time, and maintaining infrastructure such as documentation and developing policy requires volunteer work. This work is mutually beneficial, where institutions collectively benefit from participating in this work, even though it requires time from individuals at institutions. The PCC, however, is able to continue and benefit only when institutions are actively participating in the work. Equally, to ensure that work created by PCC institutions is trustworthy, a certain volume of contributions is required to maintain proficiency. Within a cooperative environment, each individual institution has a give-and-take relationship with the PCC, and members expect that each institution is contributing.

As statistics are self-reported, there likely are many members that do not report their statistics. Of the many members that consistently do not report any PCC contributions, some are known to be contributing to the PCC. Even if individual institutions do not find a value in reporting their contributions, it is important to the PCC as a whole that statistics are accurate. They serve as a report on the collective work of the PCC and the value that the PCC collectively brings to the cataloging community, and they help justify the ongoing costs to LC to maintain the PCC through the Secretariat.

Members may also not report their contributions accurately, although these numbers may not be as significant as not reporting statistics at all. To improve accuracy and to reduce the work required of members, it would be useful to investigate any real or perceived barriers to reporting statistics and to consider ways to overcome them (for example, whether statistics collection could be automated by LC, NACO nodes, or vendors). It would also be worthwhile for the Secretariat to compare transactions with reported contributions to determine the accuracy of reported statistics.

Enforcement and Encouragement

When something is required, there are often negative consequences if the requirement is not met. Although the PCC has defined repercussions for members that do not meet the requirements, based on the existence of many members continually reporting no contributions, the PCC has not enforced these repercussions. In any event, it seems preferable to encourage greater participation rather than to punish limited participation.

This inconsistency can be mitigated by changing the contributions from being “required” to being “expected” or “anticipated”. The expected contributions from each member could be set at a number that fulfills the PCC’s need to recoup organizational effort and ensure quality, and would clearly be considered as a minimum. These contributions, therefore, likely would be less than is required currently. To make contributions from diverse institutions more equitable, rather than establishing expectations for members based on institution size, expected contributions could be based on a per capita formula, with each active PCC cataloger at an institution expected to contribute an amount to maintain proficiency. It would, however, be up to each institution to decide internally how that total number of expected contributions would be distributed among their catalogers. The statistics submission form within the PCC Directory could be modified to allow each member to report how many staff actively contribute to each program.

To further develop the sense that the PCC is a community of catalogers, we recommend that a mentoring committee be established. This committee would be responsible for monitoring contributions and identifying members that are not meeting expectations, which is work that currently is the responsibility of the Secretariat. Once these members are identified, the mentoring committee would contact each institution directly to confirm that they still wish to participate in the PCC and to identify whether any support is needed or whether a funnel project would be appropriate for the institution. For specific members that require remediation to continue meeting the expected contributions, a specific mentoring committee member could be appointed to act as a liaison with the institution. The mentoring committee could also take on some tasks associated with accepting new members into the PCC, such as managing the review process.

Understanding that institutions of any size may have short-term extenuating circumstances, such as system migrations or staff retirements, we recommend that the statistics submission form within the PCC Directory be expanded to include a narrative section for mitigating reasons that expectations were not met. This would allow members that have contributed less than usual in a year to explain the reason. Members that exercise this option could have their contributions compared against their contributions in the previous three years to confirm that their low contributions were exceptional, although institutions should not be able to use this option in two consecutive years. The existing timeline, with action starting only in the second year of a member’s inability to meet the expectations, is appropriate.

With the recognition that cataloging knowledge is essential to all the work that the PCC does, if a per capita formula for expected contributions is adopted, we recommend that applicants for

participation on committees, task groups, etc., be asked to confirm that they individually have met their expected contributions because otherwise they should be encouraged to focus their efforts on these cataloging contributions. There will be certain situations, such as developing training on emerging tools, where individuals with expertise are sought and this prerequisite would have to be waived.

Types of Contributions

The task group acknowledges that the PCC exists to catalog resources by creating trustworthy resource descriptions and by improving efficiency through shared use and reuse and consistent standards. To that end, the most important work for PCC that any institution can do is in cataloging resources and any individual who contributes to the PCC must have a solid understanding of cataloging principles and instructions. The contributions that currently are measured, therefore, remain the most important contributions that members make to the PCC.

The PCC is more than just a provider of quality metadata, however. It has become a community, developing cataloging standards that are used beyond member institutions, evaluating emerging technologies, and creating best practices. As the metadata creation environment continues to change rapidly, this work likely will become even more important. The PCC relies on volunteers to contribute to this work, all of which is essential to the successful functioning of the PCC. These include serving on committees and task groups (for example, the PCC Task Group on Legal Status), serving as a funnel coordinator or as a reviewer, participating in pilot projects (for example, the PCC URI MARC Pilot) or shared projects to enhance PCC data (for example, the NACO CJK Funnel References Project), and experimenting in non-traditional resource descriptions (such as Wikidata). There are also informal means of participating in the PCC that help the community (for example, participating in the discussion list).

While the existing required contributions are relatively easily measurable and relatively equivalent (although there are significant differences in time required between, for example, reviewing and updating a pre-RDA authority record and correcting a coding error), these other types of contributions are far less quantifiable. Given the wide range of potential work that occurs within the PCC, it would be difficult to try to quantify even similar types of work without trying to compare all the types of potential work and equate them to existing required contributions. Such an approach would also potentially be unfair, because many types of this community work require standing for election or applying, and unsuccessful candidates or applicants would have been willing to make these contributions.

The statistics submission form within the PCC Directory could be modified to allow institutions to report their various community contributions through a narrative section. This could be a separate component, not connected to any individual program, and would allow institutions to report anything with which they have been involved beyond what is quantifiable within a specific program (for example, committee work, revising training, or answering questions from the discussion list). All institutions could be encouraged to complete this section if relevant, and this

would be another opportunity to collect more information about all the work that occurs within the PCC. This section of the statistics submission form could be separate to the section for extenuating circumstances.

In addition to recognizing the non-cataloging contributions of members, the PCC should publicly acknowledge the value of community contributions. While publicly available statistics demonstrate the cataloging contributions of institutions, community contributions are not always obvious. Certificates or other documentation could be sent to the individual and their institution. On the individual level, people like to know that their work is valued, and such acknowledgements may be useful for purposes of career advancement. When institutions encourage their staff to contribute to the PCC, they are giving them time to work on projects that do not directly benefit the institution, so they should also be acknowledged for the work of their staff.

Contributions from Unaffiliated Individuals

There is a value in expanding PCC participation to allow for individual contributions. This is not an avenue for contributions from institutions that have only one individual contributing or from individuals who have moved from a PCC institution to a different institution. Due to the potential complexity of managing individual contributions, institutional memberships are still required and preferable. This would allow the standard process of using the MARC organization code to identify contributions and would keep statistics consistent with other institutions. For non-PCC institutions that have hired an experienced PCC cataloger and want to start contributing to the PCC, the expedited membership option is available and could be better advertised.

We recommend that the PCC work with NACO nodes to explore how individual contributions could be managed. This option could be available to unaffiliated catalogers who already have experience with PCC cataloging and already were independent in specific programs at a PCC institution (that is, the same requirements as for the expedited PCC institutional membership). To facilitate the management of individual contributors and to fit this new stream of contributions better into the existing structure (which is based on tracking participation of institutions rather than individuals at institutions), we recommend that a funnel project for individual contributors be established to manage those individual contributors. Depending on the complexity of maintaining a funnel for individuals and the expected volume of contributions by individuals, it may be best to allow only the funnel coordinator the ability to make contributions, with other individual contributors completing work in a shared save file for submission by the funnel coordinator. This would simplify the management of these contributions by ensuring that the funnel coordinator is responsible for maintaining a roster of active contributors and would reduce the number of potentially inactive accounts.

Expanding Membership

As the PCC works to expand its membership, required contributions may intimidate some institutions from applying to join. Even for institutions that know they would be able to encounter

a sufficient number of records to create or modify to meet the requirements, the additional time commitment to do this new work may be daunting. It may be beneficial to consider either creating a funnel project within each program for all new institutions for their first two or three years of membership, or to proportionally reduce required contributions for full members for their first two or three years of membership.

Contributions in a Linked Data Environment

As cataloging moves from discrete authority and bibliographic records to linked data for describing resources, the way that contributions are measured will need to change. As descriptions become more about relationships between entities and as resource descriptions are no longer independently understandable, what counts as a contribution is less obvious. This change, however, affects more than just how contributions are counted and is not within the scope of work for this task group.

Recommendations

1. Change the term “required contributions” to “expected contributions”.
2. Develop a written justification for the importance of statistics.
3. Change the contribution expectations to be a multiple of the number of active PCC catalogers at an institution. Revise the statistics submission form to record the number of individuals who contribute.
4. Distinguish between “cataloging” contributions and “community” contributions and develop a section within the statistics submission form to allow institutions to provide a short narrative of their community contributions.
5. Recognize community contributions by providing recognition to both the individual and their institution.
6. Work with LC to determine whether statistics can be collected when they are loaded into the LC database, based on the cataloging agency or the latest modifying agency recorded. If this is not possible, work with the NACO nodes to determine whether some or all statistics collection could be automated, which may require different solutions for the different programs.
7. Develop a section within the statistics submission form to allow institutions to provide a short narrative of mitigating circumstances that caused them to not meet their expected contributions.
8. For new members that are not part of funnel projects, reduce expected contributions either to one-third for the first year and two-thirds for the second year then regular contributions or to one-half for the first year then regular contributions. Alternatively,

establish a funnel project for new members to join temporarily for their first two or three years of membership.

9. Establish a funnel project for individual contributors. Work with the NACO nodes to facilitate this.
10. Establish a mentoring committee, which could work with new members and with members that are not meeting the expected contributions. This committee would be responsible for contacting members that have not met the expected contributions to inquire about the reason and to determine whether support is needed and to consider whether institutions should be moved to funnels.
11. Investigate how cataloging contributions will be measured in a linked data environment.

Task Group Members

Brian Stearns (Chair) (University of Alberta)
Judith Cannan (Library of Congress)
Karen J. Detling (National Library of Medicine)
Chris Long (University of Colorado Boulder)
MacKenzie Smith (University of Georgia)
Cynthia Whitacre (OCLC)
Hank Young (University of Florida)