

Responding to a long-overlooked need among researchers and library professionals, *College & Research Libraries* (C&RL) is proud to announce an authorial name change policy, which takes effect immediately. This policy supports all requested name changes and applies to all articles published by C&RL, past, present, and future. This policy is the work of a C&RL Editorial Board working group that responded to a name change policy request by Shannon Devlin and Brian M. Watson. In response, C&RL Editor Wendi Arant Kaspar established a small task force composed of Watson, Kristen Totleben, Amy Lazet, and Michelle Demeter. The goal of this group was to examine best practices in alignment with the journal's standards by designing a comprehensive policy outlining the parameters of responsibilities and expectations of both C&RL authors and the Editor in regard to name change requests. The policy was approved by the C&RL Editorial Board in May 2021 and workflows were then addressed and coordinated in anticipation of the policy's enactment in April 2022.

C&RL hopes that this important policy will implement a more equitable and inclusive publishing practice by supporting all authors—including, but not limited to authors who are trans and gender diverse, who change their name upon marriage or divorce, international authors with misspelt or mistranslated names, and Indigenous, and international authors—who would like their scholarly records to reflect their name changes. To implement this policy for your own name change, please read the policy tenets below and visit C&RL's "[Author Guidelines](#)." For more information about why this policy is so important, please read Lazet and Watson's adjoining editorial in this issue of C&RL, which provides a brief retrospective on how name change policies have been developed and how they have positively impacted academic publishing.

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## *College & Research Libraries* Authorial Name Change Policy (2022)

*College & Research Libraries* is committed to supporting requests for author name and/or pronoun changes. Name changes and pronoun changes are available upon request by contacting the editor directly at [ktotleben@library.rochester.edu](mailto:ktotleben@library.rochester.edu), and approved without documentation. All requests will be handled with confidentiality and as quickly as possible. C&RL based its best practices on the five guiding principles noted in "[A Vision for a More Trans-Inclusive Publishing World](#)" shared by the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE).

Authorial name changes to previously published articles may be requested by an author for any reason, including name changes due to marriage or divorce; non-Western naming struc-

tures; or gender identity. Trans and gender diverse authors who wish to request a change to a previous publication are particularly encouraged to contact the editors. Authors will not be asked to provide official or legal documentation of the name change, and all requests will be kept confidential by the editors.

Any request for a name change will result in removal of the earlier name from any and all publication repositories. This extends to both the metadata of the article, as well as the PDF of the article itself. If applicable, any pronoun changes (as in a biographical entry) may be requested at the same time. Although some publication flows may be out of the scope of *C&RL*, the editors will make every effort to ensure that name changes are reflected in reprints and downstream publications.

In order to maintain the author's privacy, name changes will not be announced, nor will any notices be published that draw attention to the changes. Co-authors will not be notified of the change.

Once received, requests will be processed in an expedient manner and will not require deliberation by the editorial board.

*C&RL* editors will verify citations and bibliographies in future submissions to ensure that the earlier name is not included in any new articles published in *C&RL*.

## Guest Editorial

# The Case for Retroactive Author Name Changes

Amy Lazet and Brian M. Watson

“A name is a common way of identifying and understanding a person’s subjectivity [...] various ways, naming provides cues for one’s gender, states, religion, ethnicity, and nationality.”<sup>1</sup>

A name is a reflection of the individual, yet for authors who no longer identify with their birth name or whose name has changed, continuing to see their previous name on publications can be painful, annoying, or even potentially dangerous. While this applies to many authors (as will be discussed below) trans and gender-diverse authors are particularly faced with an untenable choice: disassociate themselves from their previous writings (thereby losing their scholarly record), or out themselves as trans by claiming previous publications under their new name. Neither choice is viable, and in response, there is a growing movement to correct the published record to reflect these authors’ true names.

## Background

Authors’ names have long been an issue in publishing as the Western naming structure of “first name last name” is not universally applicable.<sup>2</sup> Chinese names are typically structured so that the name listed first is the surname while the second-order name is the given name.<sup>3</sup> South Indians, on the other hand, do not typically have a surname, and are known only by their given name. In order to fulfill the Western-based authorial naming criteria, the father’s given name is commonly used, often leading to confusion as to who deserves the credit for the publication—the author or their father.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, women in academia have traditionally faced issues related to assuming a partner’s name.<sup>5</sup> If a woman has established a professional reputation under her maiden name, how can she continue to associate that record with herself if she changes her name upon marriage or divorce?

Open Researcher and Contributor ID (ORCID) is the most well-known workaround and offers authors the ability to register with the free service and receive a unique identifier.<sup>6</sup> This identifier allows all of one’s published works to be associated with the author as a unique individual, a useful feature if one’s name changes or if one has a common name that could be confused with other authors. What ORCID does not do, however, is allow authors to retroactively change their name on previously published works.

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## Importance of Retroactive Name Changes

For authors who change their name due to a change in their gender identity (the primary focus of *C&RL's* Authorial Name Change Policy), this continued association with a deadname (a given name that typically aligns with one's assigned-at-birth gender but is now no longer used) is painful and can even be dangerous.<sup>7</sup> For an author to claim publications under a deadname effectively outs them as trans and can lead to transphobic attacks.<sup>8</sup> This has led to a growing recognition of the necessity of allowing name changes not just in article metadata but also in the article itself.

According to Dr. Theresa Jean Tanenbaum, a researcher and author at the forefront of the issue of retroactive name changes, altering the article itself is a necessary element of these policies. Retroactive name changes that neglect to change the author's name on the previously published article itself (i.e., not just in the attendant metadata) are a non-starter for her—they will still lead to deadnaming, misgendering, or anti-trans bias rather than focusing on the scholarship.<sup>9</sup> Tanenbaum also rejects the established convention of issuing an erratum or corrigendum when changing a trans author's name, as this effectively announces to the entire readership of the journal that the author is transgender.<sup>10</sup>

Issuing a correction related to the author's name is in keeping with the International Association of Scientific, Technical & Medical Publishers' guidelines, which state that "articles that have been published as the version of record should remain extant, exact and unaltered to the maximum extent possible."<sup>11</sup> However, while a case can be made for keeping the author's original name associated with the article for the sake of preservation of the record, does the need for historical information and context surrounding a work supersede the need of the author for privacy and even, possibly, safety? Are there other instances where the benefit to an individual outweighs the benefit of creating greater context for a work? The answer within the archival field is a resounding yes.

## Privacy and Anonymity

Sara S. Hodson acknowledges the "competing ethics" of privacy versus traditional archival goals. Even Hodson, however, outlines the importance of maintaining anonymity in the archives for those mentioned in archival documents, specifically focusing on the invasion of privacy.<sup>12</sup> As defined by William Prosser, invasion of privacy has four facets: "intrusion upon an individual's seclusion or solitude, or into [their] private affairs; public disclosure of embarrassing or private facts about the individual; publicity that places the individual in a false light in the public eye; and appropriation, for another person's advantage, of the individual's name or likeness."<sup>13</sup> Knowing the details of an author's identity, particularly for trans authors, has the potential to violate the first and second tenets outlined by Prosser.

Although Hodson states that "conventional wisdom suggests that the right of privacy ends at death, since the dead obviously can no longer be embarrassed by the revelation of personal information," this notion is directly at odds with social justice issues surrounding identity.<sup>14</sup> In his think piece for NBC titled "A transgender person's deadname is nobody's business. Not even a reporter's," Chase Strangio of the American Civil Liberties Union argues that to violate the identity and language surrounding the gender of a trans individual, even after death, constitutes a violation of decency. The subtitle of the piece states, "An obituary is supposed to be a sign of respect for who a person was, but deadnaming is a way to shame

trans people for who they are.”<sup>15</sup> In this construct, then, the right to privacy does not end at an individual’s death but should be maintained whenever referencing the individual; to do otherwise is discriminatory. As Strangio says, “Your prurient curiosity shouldn’t get to trump our right to dignity and respect.”<sup>16</sup>

Although anonymity in the archives can be viewed as a negative (it has been used to erase the identities and even the presence of minorities in historical documents),<sup>17</sup> lack of knowledge of the author of a work does not lessen the value of the work, and indeed is common in some types of works (ephemeral objects, photographs, etc.).<sup>18</sup> As pointed out by Emily Ross, knowing the name of an author does not guarantee knowledge of the context surrounding the creation of the work, nor does *not* knowing the author’s name translate to a complete lack of context.<sup>19</sup> While knowing the details of an author’s background can be *helpful* in interpreting their work, it is not *necessary* in understanding the work. Information about the author can supply context for the text but not knowing “does not make the text itself any more unreliable.”<sup>20</sup>

Furthermore, authors have long been able to choose how they are identified at the time of publication, i.e., using their legal name, publishing anonymously, or using a pseudonym.<sup>21</sup> Ellen Gruber Garvey points out that many authors have used pseudonyms to assume a mantle that may or may not be accurate, yet the veracity of the author’s name is not verified at the time of the original submission for publication.<sup>22</sup> While the difference is the name provided upon publication versus retroactively, as Tanenbaum points out, the historical record is a living, breathing artifact; it is not static.<sup>23</sup> To hold the historical record as sacred and inviolate is at odds with the very nature of the discipline of history; new information is constantly being uncovered and used to amend the record.<sup>24</sup>

## Changes in the Field of Publishing

Within the field of publishing itself, there is an increasingly widespread acceptance of retroactive name changes. The American Psychological Association states that “respecting authors’ autonomy and recognizing that authors’ names may change after articles have been published, APA Publishing will update author names without publishing an accompanying correction notice. Changes will be made to the digital record for APA-published eBooks or journal articles that have already appeared in print.”<sup>25</sup> Some of the first major organizations to allow retroactive name changes on articles include: American Psychological Association Publishing; American Chemical Society; Association for Computing Machinery (ACM); Wiley-Blackwell Publishing; and now the Association of College & Research Libraries’ *College & Research Libraries*.<sup>26</sup>

The path to the adoption of these changes, however, was hardly smooth. According to Tanenbaum, who led the initiative for ACM to allow retroactive name changes, the editorial board raised concerns related to the layout and pagination of articles if they underwent an authorial name change. The ACM also expressed concerns about published articles being subpoenaed for a legal proceeding; if this were to happen, how would they prove the content itself had not been altered? ACM’s solution was to keep a copy of the original on a dark server that would only be accessed if subpoenaed.<sup>27</sup>

Furthermore, the workarounds provided for authorial naming conventions (i.e., ORCID) have severe limitations; as South Indian author V. Raveenthiran points out, “the ORCID number may be a useful supplement; but it cannot replace [the] author’s name in publications because *identification is not the same as identity*. [The] ORCID number may facilitate unequivocal identification of individuals but the identity of authors still rests with their names” [emphasis added].<sup>28</sup>

Considering all the above concerns, the *C&RL* Name Change Policy Task Force wrote an [Authorial Name Change Policy](#). This brings *C&RL* in line with the more than 50 publishers that have announced or implemented policies since 2020 that are close to or aligned with the five principles outlined by *C&RL*'s Name Change Policy Working Group (NCPWG): accessibility; comprehensiveness; invisibility; expediency and simplicity; and recurrence and maintenance.<sup>29</sup>

## Implications for Information Science

The use of an author's name for cataloging and authority control is one of the fundamental tenets of library and information science. Melvil Dewey felt that proper naming warranted more concern in the first edition of *Classification and Subject Index for Cataloguing and Arranging the Books and Pamphlets of a Library* than subject cataloging. It remains one of the most important fields in MARC 21 (1XX), occupies a significant portion of *RDA: Resource Description and Access* (chapters 9-11), and explaining it required Daniel N. Joudrey, Arlene G. Taylor, and David P. Miller (2015), and Lois Mai Chan and Athena Salaba (2016) to write more than one hundred pages each to properly discuss the issue.<sup>30</sup> In recent years, a number of authors—including academics, activists, and classically trained catalogers—have raised concerns around the use of names as identifiers and access points. These ethical issues include the use of women's maternal or married names, the use of colonial and anthropological nomenclature, misspelled or miscopied non-Western names, and racist terminology.<sup>31</sup>

Traditionally, within the field of library science, catalogers have been instructed to include all iterations of author's name, and authors have been directed to self-cite earlier publications.<sup>32</sup> Lorraine J. Pellack and Lori Osmus Kappmeyer demonstrated, through an analysis of 1,159 citations from 380 publications by eight academics, that authors (in this case women who changed their names, likely due to marriage) "who do not include their former name as part of their new name have less opportunity for the surnames to match between the publication and the index[ing conducted by databases]."<sup>33</sup>

Authors applying queer theory to cataloging have also focused on other ways information in authority records out transgender individuals. In the article "More Than a Name: A Content Analysis of Name Authority Records for Authors Who Self-Identify as Trans," Kelly J. Thompson examines the authority records for 60 authors who self-identify as trans to ascertain if, and how, the authority records out these authors. By examining the fields for recording gender and name (among others), Thompson identified 39 out of 60 records that effectively outed the authors.<sup>34</sup> Of these 39, only 21 cited the author as the source for the information about their gender identity. Thirty-four of the 39 provided more than one name for the author, either as a name set (alternate versions of a name used simultaneously) or name sequence (names that the author has used in the past but does not currently use).<sup>35</sup> That so many authority records contained sensitive information that did not come from the authors themselves verified Thompson's concern that authority records may unwittingly—and unacceptably—expose the authors in ways the authors never intended. This issue has been also explored by others<sup>36</sup> who demonstrate that including gender identity in authority records is not necessary for bibliographic purposes.

In fact, the major citation style guides differ on how they approach the issue. The print version of the *Chicago Manual of Style* does not offer clear direction on the names of transgender authors, but the *Chicago Manual of Style Online* offers a "Q&A" section on their website for questions not covered in the published guide. One user wrote to the *Chicago*

Manual editorial team via the website's FAQ, inquiring how to deal with deadnames and the harm done by them: "[a] dead name [sic] may come with unhappy emotional associations and moreover is in any case no longer the real or current name of the author concerned[...] citing the author with that dead name [sic] may therefore be an ethically compromised act, be hurtful, or simply be factually incorrect."<sup>37</sup> In response, the editorial board wrote, "obviously, changing the author's name on a source citation in a note or bibliography is unhelpful to readers who go looking for that work. It also misrepresents the publishing history of the work."<sup>38</sup> However, they do note that the best practice is to "contact the author for permission and instructions on cross-referencing or glossing the names." In the event the author cannot be contacted, it is best practice to prefer the deadname and "use your judgment with regard to adding the current name."<sup>39</sup>

In contrast, the MLA guidelines were updated in 2021 to include the following information:

*When not to supply information, cross-reference, or use the published form of a name:*  
If you are writing about or working directly with an author whose name changed and you know that they do not use their former name in references to their work—for example, for trans authors—list their works under the name they use, regardless of the name that appears in the source. Do not supply information about the name change or cross-reference entries, and avoid using the former name in your prose.<sup>40</sup>

Finally, the latest edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* is nearly comprehensive. Sections 5.1 and 5.2 cover reducing bias, and the online style guide includes a detailed section titled "General Principles for Reducing Bias." The "Principles" observe that descriptors with modifiers (for example, "cisgender women") are "more specific" but that an author should not "mention characteristics gratuitously" and to "choose terms that are appropriately specific."<sup>41</sup> The same section also strongly recommends that authors should "acknowledge people's humanity" by choosing labels carefully and avoiding pejorative language.<sup>42</sup>

The APA style guide also offers a 6,000-word section on gender that differentiates gender from sexuality and offers considerations of all aspects of gender: cisgender; transgender; nonbinary; and gender nonconforming.<sup>43</sup> Other recommendations include using "sex assigned at birth" to describe the usually binary assignment of birth sex to individuals; the terms "transprejudice" and "transnegativity" to "denote discriminatory attitudes toward individuals who are transgender;" and the use of the umbrella term TGNC (transgender and gender-nonconforming).<sup>44</sup> The APA style guide echoes the Chicago style guide by recommending that authors "consult the person and respect their preferences in whether and how to address the name change" but does not offer a recommendation on what to do in the event that an author cannot be reached.<sup>45</sup> Finally, in a departure from many style guides, the APA specifically discusses the use of pronouns, instructing that the individual's choice should be preferred in all cases, and recommends the use of the singular "they" when discussing a person whose gender is unknown.<sup>46</sup>

## Conclusion

As pointed out by Tanenbaum, et al, "Disclosing someone's transition through the use of their previous name not only endangers that person's life, and livelihood, but also exposes them

to implicit and explicit bias in terms of citations, tenure and promotion, and other aspects of their professional life. A trans scholar should be evaluated based on their scholarship, not their transness."<sup>47</sup>

In one of the first peer-reviewed articles on retroactive name changes, Leo Chan Gaskins and Craig R. McClain point out that inequity is currently embedded in the publishing industry for transgender authors. "Invisible" name changes (ones implemented without publishing an erratum or corrigendum) are necessary to correct this, since "academic journals should not act as gatekeepers for a transgender person's ability to protect and control their own information and narrative [...] non-visible name change policies return that control to the individual."<sup>48</sup>

Retroactive, invisible authorial name changes are essential. Despite concerns about the integrity of the record if authorial names are changed retroactively, information science has long held that protection of one's identity is a tenet worth preserving. Indeed, it is a necessity in a world that is moving toward greater equity for all. In this regard, *C&RL's* new retroactive name change policy is crucial in protecting authorial identity, and a proud day for the field of information science.

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## Notes

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13. Ibid, 195, citing William L. Prosser, "Privacy," *California Law Review* 48 (August 1960): 383-423.
14. Hodson, "In Secret Kept," 196.
15. Chase Strangio, "Opinion | Nobody Needs to Know a Transgender Person's Deadname—Not Even a Reporter," NBC News, accessed January 28, 2021, <https://www.nbcnews.com/think/opinion/transgender-persons-deadname-nobody-s-business-not-even-reporter-ncna1206721>.
16. Ibid. Tanenbaum also briefly mentions in "Publishers: Let Transgender Scholars Correct Their Names" that (at the time of her writing), 15 "countries criminalize the gender identity or expression of trans people—a crime that in some cases carries the death penalty."
17. Ghosh, "Decoding the Nameless," 301.



18. Hodson, "In Secret Kept," 242.
19. Emily Ross, "The Problem of Anonymity in Archives: A Literature Review," *Bilgi Dünyası* 14, no. 2 (October 31, 2013): 242, <https://doi.org/10.15612/BD.2013.119>.
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31. See the Bibliographic Appendix.
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