

## Tongue-Tied by Authorities : The Library of Congress Vocabularies and the Shakespeare Authorship Question

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## **Tongue-Tied by Authorities : The Library of Congress Vocabularies and the Shakespeare Authorship Question**

### Abstract

Despite the existence of a vast literature reflecting hundreds of years of scholarship questioning the authorship of the works of Shakespeare, conventional Library of Congress Name Authority Files and Subject Headings are unable to accurately describe this literature owing to their assumption that the author was William Shakspere of Stratford-upon-Avon. Adopting a pragmatic, philosophically realist perspective based in social epistemology, this article highlights past and current deficiencies in the authority records concerning Shakespeare and proposes changes that would better reflect the nature and purpose of this literature, as well as the historic signifiers of the named persons in question.

Keywords: authorship; descriptive cataloguing; Shakespeare, William; subject analysis and access;

### **1.0 Introduction**

In the opening pages of her 2015 book, *The Millionaire and the Bard: Henry Folger's Obsessive Hunt for Shakespeare's First Folio*, Andrea Mays observes, "everyone knows William Shakespeare"<sup>1</sup>. A visit to any public or academic library will seem to confirm this statement: As of this writing, the WorldCat library catalog lists 2,458 titles under the subject heading "Shakespeare, William, 1564 1616 – Biography," while a similar Google Scholar search yields over 40,000 hits.

However, for centuries there have been persistent doubts about the identity of the author of *Hamlet*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *Macbeth*, fuelling a substantial and ever-growing literature dedicated to answering what is known as the Shakespeare Authorship Question (henceforth SAQ). This literature interrogates the tenets of the traditional biography of Shakespeare – that of a common-born "natural genius" who somehow grew rich writing plays of the greatest erudition primarily about royalty and members of the

aristocracy without himself possessing either rank or education – and proposes more likely alternative candidates. These hundreds of anti-Stratfordian books and thousands of articles demonstrate that the problem with all claims to knowledge regarding Shakespeare comes down to the fact that there is an unbridgeable and to date inexplicable gulf between the prosaic documented life of the uneducated Stratford businessman and the expansive brilliance of the work conventionally attributed to him. Generations of Shakespeare biographers have sought to explain away these apparent discrepancies as a result of records being “now lost” or simply the result of the transcendent, limitlessness of the author’s imagination, while those who view this attribution as fundamentally improbable have tended to seek more likely authors from among other known Elizabethan writers such as Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, Sir Francis Bacon, or Christopher Marlowe (advocates of whom are respectively known as Oxfordians, Baconians, and Marlovians).

Despite the fact that the Oxfordian, Baconian, and Marlovian theories have generated a substantial scholarly literature, these skeptical and contrarian claims are cataloged and classified by the knowledge organization systems (KOSs) of the Library of Congress in such a way as to make them appear to be merely aberrant, minority opinions unworthy of serious consideration rather than emerging from genuine scholarly inquiry. Instead, it is the conventional Stratfordian biography that is treated by these globally-adopted LC Name Authority Files (LC NAF) and Subject Headings (LCSH) as if it consisted of established and incontrovertible facts, despite there being not a single contemporary document connecting in any way Shakspeare of Stratford (Note: spelling is deliberate -- see Section 2.3) with the writing of anything – beyond six shakily-drawn signatures. For conventional biographers of the poet-playwright seeking to once again relate the standard alleged narrative of the “Stratford genius”, this state of affairs presents no barrier to discovery; for scholars questioning this narrative or seeking to argue for

alternative candidates, however, the LC NAFs and LCSH are of far less utility, offering as they do terminology and hierarchies that are by turns fanciful, inaccurate, unhelpful, and pejorative. Unfortunately, deficiencies in indexing such as these tend to steer researchers into reproducing dominant, conventional narratives in their own work, which then through subsequent publication create new literary warrant for those same headings and classifications.<sup>2</sup>

In this article, we shall engage in a critical analysis of the current and historic treatment of the Shakespeare Authorship Question (SAQ) by the Library of Congress through its NAF (which provide the authorized forms of personal names for use in creating bibliographical records) and LCSH, highlighting some key inaccuracies and inadequacies, before outlining proposed alternative indexing aimed at clarifying concepts and making authorship literature more accessible to discovery. These terminologies are being developed for use in the Shakespeare Online Authorship Resources database (SOAR) which, since 2007, has indexed 8,400 articles and book chapters related to the SAQ.<sup>34</sup> Our proposals to update and introduce changes to LC NAF and LCSH concerning the authorship of the Shakespeare works (and discussion of their downstream effects) are premised on a theoretical foundation of philosophical realism, Deweyan pragmatism and social epistemology that emphasizes distinctions between reality and our *beliefs about* reality, skepticism towards knowledge claims and divergent interpretations within communities of inquiry – as well as the ethical commitments of library catalogers towards those communities. We present these ideas in the hope that they will help improve access to this exciting field of inquiry and in turn invigorate Shakespeare studies.

We should stress that in making these arguments and proposals below we are primarily concerned with the *limitations* of the NAF and LCSH systems themselves rather

than any *misapplication* of those headings on the part of individual catalogers; we concede that, given the nature of the extant headings, their usage in the examples highlighted below in Section 5 is entirely rational and consistent with sound cataloguing practice, and that these books were indexed with the best terms available. Our object is therefore with reforming the controlled vocabularies commonly used in cataloging in order to increase the range of options open to catalogers when indexing authorship literature related to Shakespeare.

### ***1.1 Background: SOAR (Shakespeare Online Authorship Resources)***

The SOAR online catalog is a privately-operated database managed by two of the co-authors (BB, CH) containing approximately 8,400 bibliographic records for articles and book chapters published in Oxfordian and other authorship publications over the past 150 years. The majority of publications covered in SOAR are Oxfordian,<sup>5</sup> dating from the 1920s to the present date. Approximately 6,100 of these records cover in full the 15 Oxfordian journals or newsletters published since 1920, plus all the chapters from a selection of 15 major Oxfordian books (with many more yet to be indexed). The remaining 2,300 records cover a range of attendant historical research, related literary criticism, book reviews, and interpretations of Shakespeare's works published in more than a hundred publications around the world (ranging from the *New York Times* to the *India Times*, to *Shakespeare Quarterly* and other academic journals, as well as numerous other newspapers and small journals in between). Inclusion of any of these articles or news items in SOAR is based on their relevance to the authorship issue, rather than having appeared in a core of Shakespeare-related publications.

This catalog grew out of the work of one of the authors (BB) on a book catalog for the New England Shakespeare Oxford Library<sup>6</sup> in which selected major Oxfordian

journal articles were included among the book records. It was realized then that such analytic records could be used to cover the entire contents of all past Oxfordian publications, and it was decided in 2009 to break out the analytic MARC records into a separate catalog/database and expand it to include these. The MARC format, with its linking fields (the 856 tag), could then take a user to the actual digitized publication and/or article, wherever it was stored. This would solve several problems at once, and provide the Oxfordian research community with an all-purpose database similar to JSTOR, but specializing in resources not included in JSTOR. Over a 5 year period from 2009-2014 SOAR grew from approximately 500 records to over 5,000, and since then has grown to approximately 8,400 entries. Future plans are to fully analyze the hundreds of digitized books, articles, reviews, commentary and resources available on the Internet, located both on current websites, and on such archival sites as the Internet Archive and the HathiTrust Digital Library. This will add many thousand more records in the near future.

All the records in SOAR follow the rules and guidelines for using the MARC format and for cataloging analytic records records, but with some exceptions to accommodate how its OPAC displays records, and also to accommodate the fact that the LibraryWorld platform does not support authority records. For example, the 773 tag does not display in the OPAC, so the 260 tag plus a 500 note must be used, even though redundant. All records contain both. Also, since we do not use call numbers in SOAR, the call number field is instead used for broad descriptors such as Article, Chapter, News, Reviews, Obituary and Conference. This provides a means to display this information in the OPAC, and also to filter search results and/or to sort search results using the "call number sort" option.

For subject indexing SOAR uses existing LCSH and LC NAF forms in 6XX fields as much as possible, but it quickly became apparent that, for purposes of indexing the Shakespeare authorship issue, the present state of the LC NAF and LCSH was inadequate. Thus we began to look at how to use LC NAF and LCSH for our project, but also how to adapt it to our subject matter and some of the unique problems presented by the SAQ.

## **2.0 Background: The Shakespeare Authorship Question**

Examined closely, Shakespeare becomes the quintessential “man who wasn’t there.” That is, there are no first-person accounts about him from his lifetime and certainly none speaking of him as a writer. Despite centuries of the most dedicated investigation, *nothing* dating to his own lifetime has ever been found connecting him to any literary or writing career. As Oxford University’s Hugh Trevor-Roper declared in 1962, this lack of evidence is

exasperating and almost incredible ... After all, [Shakespeare] lived in the full daylight of the English Renaissance in the well documented reigns of Queen Elizabeth and King James I and ... since his death has been subjected to the greatest battery of organised research that has ever been directed upon a single person. And yet the greatest of all Englishmen, after this tremendous inquisition, still remains so close to a mystery that even his identity can still be doubted.<sup>7</sup>

Contemporary references to Shakespeare the writer are entirely impersonal, essentially indicating a disembodied authorial name with no identifying biographical information. Not even the famed *First Folio* of 1623 which is prefaced with poems glorifying the author, can offer even the tiniest scrap of biographical information. Indeed, his absence from the historical record is unique and inexplicable: When compared to 24 contemporary writers, Shakespeare stands alone as yielding no literary paper trail, i.e.,



documented evidence of a writing career.<sup>8</sup> The odds against this having been the case and that Shakspere of Stratford was the author Shakespeare has been calculated at no less than 1 in 100,000.<sup>9</sup> It is little wonder that a host of luminaries such as Charlie Chaplain, Mark Twain, Walt Whitman, Henry James and Sigmund Freud , as well as U.S. Supreme Court Justices John Paul Stevens, Antonin Scalia and Sandra Day O'Connor have doubted the identity of Shakespeare, a fact few orthodox scholars care to admit.

### ***2.1 Early hints pointing to a Shakespeare authorship mystification***

One will often read, whenever the SAQ is mentioned, that doubts and speculations about the identity of Shakespeare did not arise until the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, with Delia Bacon. This is emphatically not the case: There are in fact multiple comments in 16<sup>th</sup> and early 17<sup>th</sup> centuries texts suggesting an authorship riddle predating the *First Folio* (1623) which was the first suggestion in print of the Stratfordian attribution.<sup>10</sup> Cryptic pronouncements, acrostics, anagrams and ciphers, cunning semantic or syntactic contortions are common in Elizabethan writings.<sup>11</sup> These textual peculiarities reflect the exquisite dance around anonymity and attribution in which authors, compilers, printers, and readers engaged constantly, as documented by Marcy North in her penetrating study of the prevalence, conventions and uses of anonymity in the early modern print culture.<sup>12</sup> With those hints, oblique topical references and puns - which can leave today's reader lost in a thicket of inside jokes and opaque allusions - Elizabethan authors were often trying to convey to others within a literary coterie or discerning readers' network (thereby claiming their membership in that exclusive circle), that they harbored a shared secret regarding a pseudonymous author, a concealed identity, a private occasion or a disguised subject, but could be trusted not to betray it to the general public – all the while teasing and excluding that public from the private circle of knowledge.

Within the context of these social and cultural practices and expectations of concealment, the roughly thirty clues, found in poems, epigrams, plays, satires, pamphlets, prefatory matters, or commonplace books, which obliquely touch on Shakespeare, his works or his name, repeatedly allude to a masked author of high social rank.<sup>13</sup> Some of the comments implicitly challenge the traditional dating of the plays and of the author's death (thereby debarring Shakspeare from contention)<sup>14</sup>

The Elizabethans' ingenious entertainments around naming and concealing, and perhaps Shakespeare's own reluctance to openly claim authorship, as a gesture of conventional modesty and discretion, of fashionable *sprezzatura* (notably, a nonchalance regarding intellectual property), or for obscure political reasons, may partly account for Shakespeare's notorious elusiveness as a person. But another source for this elusiveness is the total disconnect between the Shakespeare works and what they reveal about their author, on the one hand, and the documented biography of William Shakspeare of Stratford, the businessman and sometime actor, on the other.

## ***2.2 An anomalous biography and the prevalence of pseudonymity***

Modern doubts about the authorship of the Shakespeare canon did arise more explicitly in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, after decades of intense research into the biography of William Shakspeare of Stratford-upon-Avon yielded no "literary paper trail": no mention of him *as a writer* in any public or private document of the time, no original manuscripts, no eulogies when he died supposedly famous in 1616, no testimonies from his neighbors, relatives or associates describing him as a writer.<sup>15</sup> Nuttal remarked on Shakespeare's "almost pathological habit of concealment": "Shakespeare's work is a huge vanishing act. This copious body of superlative dramatic writing is accompanied by no letters, no

evidence of attendance at any church, no professional accounts. A chronicle of immaculate absenteeism.<sup>16</sup>”

Notably, all the documents unearthed thanks to this search show Shakspere as a successful businessman, lending money, buying real estate, suing debtors and owning theater shares. In fact, nothing outside two brief, glancing (and tenuous) mentions in separate statements in the 1623 First Folio, most likely edited by fellow poet-playwright (and master of ambiguity) Ben Jonson, links the works to Stratford and Avon, and they do so only posthumously.<sup>17</sup> Shakspere's last will, in particular, is an embarrassment, listing in detail all his goods but failing to mention any books, maps, musical instruments, artworks or manuscripts or even bookshelves, desks, or writing implements – all valuable items at the time. The unease created by the gaping discrepancy between the biography thus reconstructed and the erudition and temperament of the author as revealed in the works is what has impelled all authorship doubters to search for an alternative candidate who would better fit the bill.

It is within this general movement of the “unsatisfied” that the Oxfordian theory was first proposed by J. Thomas Looney in 1920.<sup>18</sup> Its originality stems from its proponent’s unique approach: rather than selecting prematurely a candidate among the luminaries of the Elizabethan age and then trying to find elements in Shakespeare’s works that could justify that prior choice, Looney proceeded instead like a criminal profiler, deriving from the works themselves a set of qualities or characteristics their author must have possessed – a profile – and then looking among well-known Elizabethan writers for a potential match. This inductive method led him to Edward de Vere, the 17<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford, a courtier and patron of the arts, who was in his lifetime highly praised by some for his erudition, generosity to writers and musicians, and talents as a poet and playwright,

and castigated by others for an eccentric lifestyle, his love of all things Italian, and the squandering of his estates.<sup>19</sup> Today he has largely been erased from historical memory.

Beyond the many parallels between Oxford's life and Shakespeare's plays, plots, characters, and topical allusions (which we have no space to get into here)<sup>20</sup>, there is at the heart of the Oxfordian hypothesis a double anomaly: on the one hand, a celebrated and prolific author in Oxford, for whom we have only a few songs and immature poems likely written in his adolescence but none of the accomplished plays for which he was famous among his contemporaries; and on the other, a set of brilliant plays without an incontestable author. Published initially under the name Shakespeare<sup>21</sup> or else anonymously, the works may have had their authorship either deliberately or unwittingly assigned to the similar-sounding William Shakspeare of Stratford, by 1623 at the latest. There are various – and as yet inconclusive – lines of inquiry as regards the reasons for this enduring example of pseudonymity, but the practice of anonymous or pseudonymous writing in general was common at the time.<sup>22</sup>

All authorship theories therefore start with the proposition that Shakespeare is a pseudonym used by a concealed author. It is for the sake of clarity in discussing this complex case of mistaken identity that anti-Stratfordian scholars use *Shakspeare* to designate the man from Stratford - which was his legal name in the historical record – and *Shakespeare* as the authorial name, whoever that might have been. Failing to make this distinction is a foundational problem with conventional library indexing.

### ***2.3 Shakspeare vs. Shakespeare***

An important part of the history of the SAQ is that the name of the man from Stratford was spelled either *Shakspeare* or *Shakspeare* from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century right into the early 20<sup>th</sup> century on a significant number of publications about him and/or the works. This was

because early Shakespeare scholars, in examining the surviving records in Stratford, especially his will, and his signatures, came to the conclusion that the legal “mode” of his name was “Shakspere” or “Shakspeare”, and that “Shakespeare” was a variant “mode” used on the published editions of his work.<sup>23</sup> In other words, “Shakespeare” was thought by some to be the pen-name used by Shakspere.

An interesting story of how this came to be is preserved in a biography published in 1851 by Charles Knight, one of many 19<sup>th</sup> century scholars who always used the name “Shakspere” when writing about Shakespeare, just as biographers of Mark Twain always make clear they are writing about a man named Samuel Langhorne Clemens, born in Hannibal, Missouri, and that the pen name “Mark Twain” came much later in his life. In Appendix 3 to his *William Shakspere: a biography*, Knight relates the story of how early Shakespeare scholars George Steevens and Edmond Malone, working with the surviving autographs (signatures) on his will, came to the conclusion that the correct legal name was “Shakspere,” but with perhaps a single use of “Shakspeare” on the last page of the Will (an “a” added to the second syllable, but that fact later became debatable since the mark that had appeared to be an “a” was later determined to be an engraver’s error in reproducing [by tracing] and interpreting the original signature). So, while there was some debate in the 19<sup>th</sup> century about this variation of “spere” vs “speare” there was no doubt about the first syllable. Albany Wallis, a lawyer working on this problem a few years after Steevens and Malone, and who himself said that he always wrote the name as “Shakspeare” (preferring it to “Shakspere”, even after learning that the “a” probably was never there), nonetheless wrote “[b]ut whether in doing so I am right or wrong, it is manifest that he wrote it himself ‘Shakspere’”.<sup>24</sup>

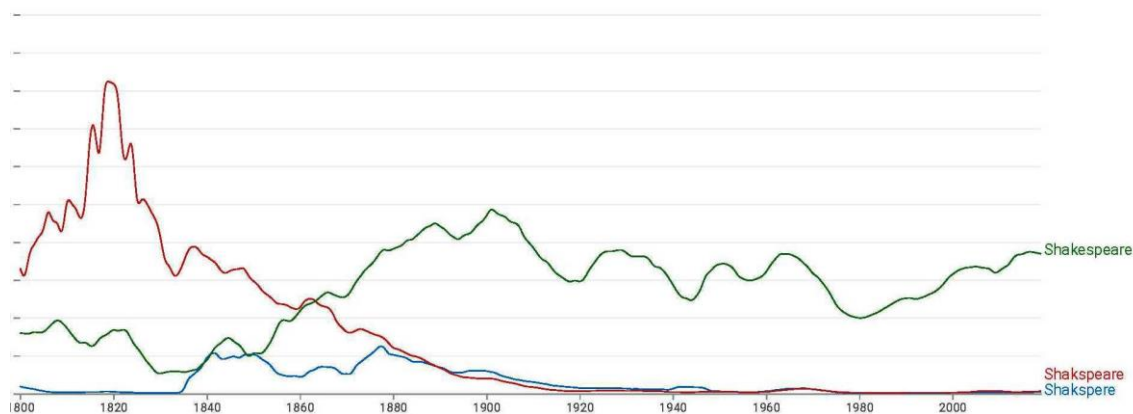
Knight continues with the story of the purchase of a “Shakspere” autograph (i.e., a signature, one recently found in an edition of John Florio’s translation of Montaigne, but later – after Knight wrote his biography – proven to be a forgery) for 145 pounds, and comments on this purchase [by the city of London] with this remarkable statement:

Honoured be those who have thus shown a reverence for the name of Shakspere!  
... [London] has called in the poet to her pageants and the painter to her high festivals. In later times her state and ancientry have been child’s play and burlesque. If the altered spirit of the majority is willing thus to reverence the symbol of the highest literature, in Shakspere’s autograph, that spirit will lead to a wise employment of the civic riches, in the encouragement of intellectual efforts in their own day.<sup>25</sup>

Knight went on to use the established legal name “Shakspere” in everything he ever wrote or published about “Shakespeare,” as did many of his fellow scholars throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century. There were literally hundreds of books and journal articles that used this spelling to refer to the author. There were also societies in the United States and England that used the name, e.g. The Shakspere Society of Philadelphia. Implicit in all these uses of his legal name for more than a century was – as Knight suggested – the simple fact that, in using his real name, they honored him.

Yet today, when one enters in Google this passage from Knight (or any passage) that uses the “Shakspere” spelling, all the hits come back as “Shakespeare” references, i.e. autocorrected to Shakespeare, but with a very small note underneath offering to search for “Shakspere”. In searching the above text from Knight the very first entry on the search results list was the William Shakespeare biography on *Wikipedia*, in which the name “Shakspere” appears just twice, once under a facsimile of one of the signatures, and once

in a footnote connected to the facsimile, explaining that Shakspere is merely a variant spelling of Shakespeare. Meanwhile the name “Shakespeare” appears 171 times in the article and all its related notes.



*Figure 1. Occurrences of the names “Shakespeare,” “Shakspeare” and “Shakspere” according to Google Ngram Viewer. Note the dramatic drop in the latter two at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, and the enormous surge in the use of the former starting in the late 1870s.*

Another tale from *Wikipedia* in this same vein is that the article on the SAQ that once explained very clearly this history of the names "Shakspere" and "Shakespeare" was taken over in 2011 by editors who revealed their biases by removing that discussion, and it remains absent from the page, but with a *see also* reference now present directing readers to a separate page “Spelling Shakespeare’s Name”.<sup>26</sup> Today on *Wikipedia*, as almost everywhere else, one reads, for example, that “William Shakespeare” was born in Stratford-upon- Avon in 1564 – no mention of anyone named “Shakspere.” This is like saying that Mark Twain was born in Hannibal in 1835, with no mention of Samuel Langhorne Clemens.

This historical disappearance of the name “Shakspere” can also be observed in the Internet Archive, where a huge and growing database of public domain books contains hundreds of Shakespeare works from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In fact, the raw data now available

in the Internet Archive illustrates not only this disappearance of the original name, but also the use of the variant first established by Steevens and Malone in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century (“Shakspeare”), followed by the change (typified by Knight’s comments in 1851) to “Shakspere” in the mid to late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

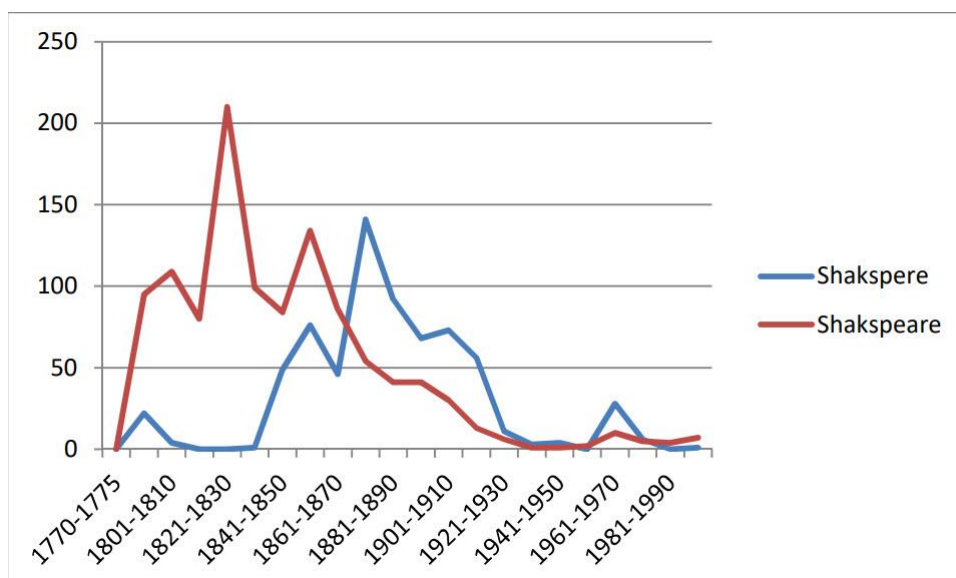
When entering either “Shakspere” or “Shakspeare” in the IA metadata search box, the range of actual usages of each name on title pages over more than two centuries is striking:

|            | 1785-1850 | 1851-1920 | 1921-2021 |
|------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Shakspeare | 758       | 339       | 53        |
| Shakspere  | 76        | 552       | 63        |

*Table 1: Occurrences of “Shakspere” and “Shakspeare” in the Internet Archive*

In the graph below (Figure 2) these numbers are broken down into decades, giving us a clear view of how extreme the shift was from the predominant usage of first one name (“Shakspeare”), to another (“Shakspere”), to almost complete oblivion for both names. The dates of usage from the mid to late 20<sup>th</sup> century undoubtedly come from reprints of 19<sup>th</sup> century works, not any new works using the older names.





*Figure 2. Publication date information from the Internet Archive showing the frequency of use for the names “Shakspeare” or “Shakspere” in the metadata records for each title over two centuries. Note the sharp drop off for both names after 1920. The slight uptick that occurs in the period of 1960-1980 is probably the result of reprint edition dates overriding original publication dates.*

In other words, the raw data in the Internet Archive (in which the spelling on the title page is preserved) reflects the fact that, after Steevens and Malone first declared the true legal name to be “Shakspeare” in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century (based on their interpretation of the 3<sup>rd</sup> signature in the will), that spelling dominated in many publications, but by the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, when the name “Shakspere” was seen to be the correct legal name, its use on many publications became the norm, slowly replacing “Shakspeare.”

(To put into perspective the use of both these names, consider that when “Shakespeare” is entered as a search in the IA, the result is 41,178 entries. And these “Shakespeare” results all point to the aforementioned “Shakspeare” and “Shakspere” titles, since the IA catalog uses the standard name of “Shakespeare” to point to all the titles, regardless of the name on the title page).

It should be noted here that even as this new spelling of the name expanded in usage in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, there were still a number of Shakespeare scholars and critics who actively resisted it, and wrote that the name “Shakespeare” is how the great author should be known. In 1863-64 major editions of the works were published as *The Works of William Shakespeare* (by Trinity College at the University of Cambridge in 1863, followed by a subsequent, briefer version in 1864 called the Globe Edition). Yet in this same period Charles Knight published his own 1873 edition as “*The Works of Shakspere.*” On the other hand the scholar James Halliwell-Phillipps stuck with “Shakespeare” in all his works, such as his own 1853 edition of the collected works (*The Works of William Shakespeare*), and was reported in a December 1879 *New York Times* story on the name spelling dispute to be arguing forcefully against the name “Shakspere” in a privately published pamphlet.<sup>27</sup>

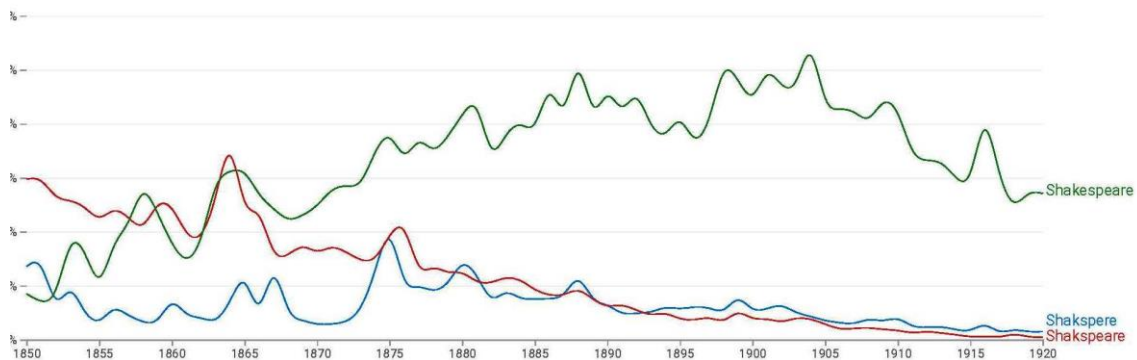


Figure 3. A comparison of the three names in the period 1850-1920, when “Shakespeare” emerged as the preferred form of the name in the 1870s, and took off in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

As the chart in Figure 3 shows, the “Shakspere” spelling was at its zenith in the 1870s, immediately following the publication of Knight’s edition, yet its use soon fell out of favor. In the period of 1875-1885 a huge change occurred, in which the spelling “Shakespeare” began to increase dramatically, and the “Shakspeare” and “Shakspere”

spellings began a slow decline and then plunged to almost zero in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. In this same period libraries began using the "Shakespeare" spelling, with Cutter's Rules (1876) using the spelling, followed by the American Library Association's *List of Subject Headings for Use in Dictionary Catalogs* (2nd ed) in 1898 (in which they use just the last name, with entries such as "Works about Shakespeare"). In 1901 the Library of Congress started issuing catalog cards, also using "Shakespeare," and by the 1919 edition of the LCSH list, the entry "Shakespeare, William, 1564-1616" had become the standard, with usage of either "Shakspeare" or "Shakspere" virtually non-existent.

Today, the origin of this abrupt change from the actual name of the man from Stratford to the name on the title pages is unclear, but that it did happen is indisputable. This moment in history is described in A. J. Pointon's 2011 book *The Man Who Was Never Shakespeare*:

The trigger for killing off Shakspeare's true name seems to have been a three-pronged attack on the orthodox theory of Shakespeare that occurred around or just after the tercentenary of Shakspeare's death in 1616. The first prong was a growth of support among senior legal and literary figures for the old theory that Francis Bacon was Shakespeare. The second was the growth of skepticism about the idea that William Shakspeare had ever been Shakespeare, encouraged by the publication of Mark Twain's *Is Shakespeare Dead?* in 1909. The third attack came from the publication around 1920 of two forceful claims, one for William Stanley, 6<sup>th</sup> Earl of Derby, the other for Edward de Vere, 17<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford, that each was the writer Shakespeare, adding to claims already made for Marlowe and Bacon.<sup>28</sup>

As the charts in Figures 1 and 3 show, however, the shift in the name actually started about 20-30 years earlier, with the pushback from scholar James Halliwell-

Phillipps throughout his career, the “Shakespeare” works published at Cambridge University in 1863-64, and the standardization to “Shakespeare” by early library subject catalogers in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century (1876, 1898) --- all this long before Oxford was proposed in 1920. But Pointon is certainly right in noting that there would seem to be an “authorship debate” reason behind what took place.

It was most likely the rapidly rising Baconian theory of Shakespearean authorship, starting in the 1850s with Delia Bacon’s 1857 book (*The Philosophy of the Plays of Shakspeare Unfolded*), that would seem to have been the impetus behind “officially” adopting the “Shakespeare” name by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Interestingly, in her book Bacon does not argue the spelling issue at all. It’s somewhat ironic that the spelling argument in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was really the provenance of the mainstream scholars, with some trying to “honor” the author by using his legal name, while others embraced the much better-sounding and attractive title page name (“Shakespeare”).

Yet as the Baconian theory grew in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century the name “Shakspeare” (the supposed author’s legal name) became more and more of a burden in the authorship controversy. In newspapers and magazines of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century discussion of the growing authorship controversy often emphasized the “nom de plume” nature of the “Shakespeare” name in comparison with the more prosaic “Shakspeare” name. And then ---within just a few decades--- the prosaic name “Shakspeare” disappeared. As this change occurred no one argued that the man from Stratford’s legal name was “Shakespeare.” Instead, there was simply a convenient shift away from the legal name “Shakspeare” in Stratford, and to the name “Shakespeare” that appeared on the title pages.

In the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century one of the definitive early books in the authorship debate (Sir George Greenwood’s *The Shakespeare Problem Restated* (1908))

was published. Greenwood devotes 5 pages to the name debate at the end of Chapter One (“The Names ‘Shakspere’ and ‘Shake-speare’”), aptly summing up how that debate had evolved throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and emphasizing at the end the obvious “nom de plume” nature of the hyphenated name and its association with such allusions as Pallas Minerva and “spear-shaking.”<sup>29</sup>

Oxfordians would argue here that perhaps the last straw was that Edward de Vere (put forth in Looney’s 1920 *Shakespeare Identified*) was a real-life Hamlet, once prominent in the Court of Elizabeth, but then (strangely) erased from history. He represented a claimant who could not be as easily dismissed as others. The Baconian claim, for example, was certainly not that he was Hamlet, but rather that he had left cipher codes in the works proving his claim. These cipher code arguments were in themselves controversial and probably hindered a full consideration of the merits of the whole authorship debate itself. After 1920 the impact of Looney’s book was immediate and grew over the next two decades, until WWII intervened.<sup>30</sup>

Little wonder that Stratfordian scholars and publishers wished to shut down the debate pre-emptively by conflating the name on the title pages with the legal name of the businessman from Stratford and pushing “Shakspere” (and its discordant biographical features) into the background and out of sight. This conflation has served the Stratfordian mythos well for a century, erasing the distance between biography and works, regardless of the historical record. The fact that some libraries adopted the form “Shakespeare” as early as 1876 and that the Library of Congress made it “official” nationwide in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century played a significant role in the shift away from “Shakspere” to “Shakespeare” that clearly occurred. Thus did all the struggles in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century to establish and use the correct legal name fall by the wayside.

This hidden fact about the Stratford man's real name vs. the apparent pen name "Shakespeare" (whether it was his pen name or someone else's) is at the heart of the SAQ debate today. For the most part, mainstream scholars don't even mention it, but there are some interesting exceptions. In his 1994 book on the SAQ, *Shakespeare, In Fact* Irvin Matus does address this issue, and makes this comment:

It may not be coincidental that the tax documents in which he is recorded as "Shakspeare" or "Shackspere" (in the other it is Shakespeare) are in regard to Privy Council levies where a "legal" name might be required. Otherwise, it appears that he had adopted a stage name that would become his pen name as well, and that he was known as Shakespeare in the city, Shakspere in the country.<sup>31</sup>

It is often said that if Shakespeare's works had been published anonymously, and scholars had tried to locate their author, they may have struggled and disagreed among themselves as to who this author might have been, but none of them would have landed on William Shakspere of Stratford as a likely candidate. Yet, he now enjoys the benefits of incumbency buttressed by the systematic and deceptive name change of Shakspere to Shakespeare which allows a merging of identities unsupported by historical documents.<sup>32</sup>

This is why – as we shall argue below – a new Name Authority File record needs to be created, one which clarifies these important facts. This is one of the ways in which it is possible to make the indexing of SAQ-literature more transparent and accessible to catalog users. The deeper theoretical rationale for seeking this goal can be deduced from a consideration of the literature of knowledge organization, to which we now turn.

### 3.0 Theory: Indexing Contested Topics

The SAQ presents a challenge to the library cataloger not only because it has for many decades been ridiculed and relegated to the margins of the academy, but because there are a host of misunderstandings surrounding it as a result of this marginalization. As mentioned above, there is a widespread and fundamental confusion about the conflation of presumed authorial names (and a host of possible spellings, with and without a hyphen), but also a profusion of theories and alternative candidates which are debated passionately among anti-Stratfordians. Most significantly, its very status as a controversy renders the subject not only an ontological problem for the cataloger but an ethical one as well. While the SAQ has not, to our knowledge, ever been addressed in the literature of Library and Information Studies (LIS) from a metadata perspective,<sup>33</sup> we can fortunately call on relevant theory to shed some light and offer guidance for seeking to address the deficiencies described in this article.

One LIS scholar who specifically addresses the matter of contested authorship is Jana Brubaker. Referring to the *Anglo-American Cataloging Rules (AACR2)*, Brubaker points out that catalogers are obligated in cases of dubious or contested authorship to seek out acceptable reference sources that can provide documentary support for an authorial attribution, but that the rules are not explicit on what this would constitute.<sup>34</sup> She concludes that catalogers need to clarify for the user those cases in which there is controversy over authorship: “it is incumbent on us to create a bibliographic record that is as useful as possible by providing the name and subject access catalog users need to find materials, as well as providing the information they need to draw their own conclusions about the nature of a work”.<sup>35</sup> Brubaker here is framing a pragmatist approach

to indexing, emphasizing the needs of the user, as well as the user's autonomy in drawing their own conclusions over reference to universalizing conceptions of truth.

Pragmatism is also a major theme in the work of Birger Hjørland, who recognizes that documenting “subject matter” alone may not be sufficient, arguing instead that it is more important that the cataloger understands the actual *aboutness* of the document, which he distinguishes from such other related categories as subject, topic, theme, domain, field, content, or information. For Hjørland, this is an *epistemological* matter premised on the theoretical positions adopted by experts in a given field, as opposed to an assumed “universal intersubjective core of agreement across all domains and theories”.<sup>36</sup>

The resulting pragmatic approach Hjørland advocates is premised on describing the theories a given author advances on their own terms as part of a community of knowers, and in such a way as to be meaningful for the user in meeting their own goals, rather than describing them in reference to some external universal concept. Elsewhere he situates pragmatism among the other epistemological orientations of empiricism, rationalism and historicism – the latter (along with pragmatism) being examples of social epistemologies, while the former two are individualist in nature.<sup>37</sup> Where empiricist indexing gathers like concepts and materials together employing “neutral” statistical analysis by the lone cataloger, and rationalism holds that each document has a limited number of “essences” that may be determined through similarly neutral, logical analysis, social epistemology views documents in relation to people and their values, goals and needs.

Social epistemology in librarianship was articulated by Jesse Shera in 1951 in terms of what he called the “external relations” of information to different and diverse



users, thus denying that there is an absolute “essence” in a work that may be rationally obtained. The example offered by Shera was a tree, which has not one single essence, but rather holds different significance for the botanist (as an organism), the landscape architect (an aesthetic object) and the lumberjack (source of economic value).<sup>38</sup> Another way of expressing this idea is *cultural warrant*, which Clare Beghtol (2005) refers to as an ethical commitment on the part of the cataloger to take into account and protect the

various shared values, beliefs, histories, and activities of a cohesive group of people. This broad description of culture means that...a user’s culture can be relatively broad (e.g., a national, religious, or ethnic culture) or relatively narrow (e.g., an academic, artistic, or institutional discipline). In this inclusive sense, culture can be likened to the term stakeholders...For this reason, the information rights of both individuals and cultures need to be ethically protected.<sup>39</sup>

These diverse expressions of salience are further made manifest within epistemic communities – or communities of knowers – as articulated by John Dewey, who sought to transcend the individualist pragmatism of William James.<sup>40</sup> As Hjørland writes,

For indexing theory, this means that the way a document is perceived, interpreted and indexed varies from one social or cultural context to another (or from one paradigm or theoretical perspective to another). In addition, the users of the index will interpret the terms in the index from their knowledge and cultural or paradigmatic background. Such perspectives tend not to speak of “the essence” of documents but consider that different views tend to emphasize different aspects of documents. By consequence, documents must be indexed from explicit theoretical points of view *to support the work of particular traditions and views* (italics added).<sup>41</sup>

In short, “indexing should reflect the need of a particular discourse or domain”.<sup>42</sup> Such a focus on discourses is by nature and necessity an epistemological stance based on the *state of knowledge* in those discourses. Writing in 1911, librarian Julius Otto Kaiser observed that accordingly,

every new discovery ... forces us to modify sometimes some of our fundamental conceptions of concretes, which in turn leads to modifications in our methods of observing and describing them. Hence whatever we assert is always subject to the proviso: at the present stage of our knowledge.<sup>43</sup>

As Dousa notes, this is a fallibilist position in “which our knowledge of the world is never absolutely certain, but ever revisable in the light of new experience.”<sup>44</sup>

Hjørland also argues in favor of *philosophical realism* in cataloging, which posits the physical existence of a world outside of human knowledge and experience, about which humans then form beliefs.<sup>45</sup> We can then avoid conflating beliefs about reality with reality itself and naturally adopt skepticism towards knowledge claims. This orientation would, in his view, lead catalogers to “distinguish between qualities of claims [and] what kinds of arguments and evidence they are supported by. We should not just provide ‘facts’ but also data needed to contextualize and evaluate those ‘facts.’ We should be open to different perspectives...”<sup>46</sup> – while at the same time insisting that these perspectives are supported by evidence.

The skeptical view on the authorship of the Shakespeare canon expressed herein and the centrality of the authorial name to resolving its mystery was also taken up by French philosopher Michel Foucault in his famous 1969 lecture, “What is an author?” In it, he proposed that what is most significant about an author is not the person as an individual, but rather the fact that they serve what he referred to as the “author function”

– that their name is a referent to a corpus of work. To illustrate, he invoked the question over Shakespeare’s authorship:

If I discover that Shakespeare was not born in the house that we visit today, this is a modification which, obviously, will not alter the functioning of this author's name. But if we proved that Shakespeare did not write those sonnets which pass for his, that would constitute a significant change and affect the manner in which the author's name functions. If we proved that Shakespeare wrote Bacon's *Organon* by showing that the same author wrote both the works of Bacon and those of Shakespeare, that would be a third type of change which would entirely modify the functioning of the author's name. The author's name is not, therefore, just a proper name like all the rest.<sup>47</sup>

As such, he wrote, the authorial name denotes something larger:

an author's name is not simply an element in a discourse (capable of being either subject or object, of being replaced by a pronoun, and the like); it performs a certain role with regard to narrative discourse, assuring a classificatory function. Such a name permits one to group together a certain number of texts, define them, differentiate them from and contrast them to others.<sup>48</sup>

Foucault’s insight lends additional theoretical weight to the imperative that the name “Shakespeare” be indexed in a manner that meaningfully connects it to a specific corpus of work, while at the same time distinguishing it from the name of an historic individual for whom no known document can connect to the canon in question, and, as a result, affirm its capacity to bear any sort of author function.

These theories are highly germane in determining how works concerning the SAQ may be indexed and classified. As shall be argued below, a great deal of misinformation regarding the debate over Shakespeare has been codified in the LC NAF and LCSH for want of appropriate headings. Standard, existing authorities that support the traditional biography have been applied to works challenging that biography with the result that the contents of these works are inaccurately represented. The community of knowers represented by anti-Stratfordians and Oxfordians hold a high degree of consensus regarding the *aboutness* of SAQ-related literature, despite mainstream disapprobation of the enterprise, yet this aboutness is not to be found in the available headings.

#### **4.0 LC Subject Headings Related to the Authorship Question, 1910-2021<sup>49</sup>**

In this section, we describe the evolution of the terms in the LC NAF and LCSH that relate specifically to the question of Shakespearean authorship.

##### ***4.1 Origins of the heading “Shakespeare”***

The main heading **Shakespeare, William, 1564-1616** has been used continuously by the Library of Congress since at least 1919 to designate the author of Shakespeare’s plays and poems, systematically but implicitly assumed to be William Shakspere of Stratford.

The American Library Association Subject Headings used the form **Shakespeare, William** (with no dates attached) as early as 1911, expanding on their use of just the last name in their 1898 list. However there was on the part of the Library of Congress as yet no mention of Shakspere or Shakespeare, either in the 1<sup>st</sup> edition of the *Subject Headings Used in the Dictionary Catalogues of the Library of Congress* (1910-14) or in the 1st and

2nd editions of the *Preliminary List of Literary Subject Headings* (1913, 1915). It is only in 1917, starting with the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of the *Preliminary List*, followed by its 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> editions (1920 and 1926), *Literature Subject Headings*, that one finds the entry **Shakespeare, William, 1564-1616**, with the dateless form **Shakespeare, William** used for the subdivisions. This dual formulation (omitting the dates in the presence of sub-headings) is identical to that found in the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of the LC Subject Headings, in 1919 and a few subsequent editions, but disappears in 1966, with the 7<sup>th</sup> edition of the LCSH. Nowadays, the heading reads simply: **Shakespeare, William, 1564-1616**.

The current LC NAF includes **Shakspere, William, 1564-1616** as a variant form amidst dozens of other variants to the authorized form, most of which reflect phonetic spellings of the name as rendered in other languages.<sup>50</sup> The many subdivisions of the main heading fall roughly into three categories:

- (1) the biography of William Shakspere of Stratford (birth, family, death, etc.);
- (2) the literary criticism and interpretation of Shakespeare's works (characters, plots, sources, style, allusions, etc.); and
- (3) the derivative cultural production (glossaries, periodicals and concordances; anniversaries, congresses, monuments and exhibitions; theatrical productions and film adaptations, etc.).

The Shakespeare subdivisions have gradually expanded over the decades. They have also on occasions been reorganized and simplified. The most notable example was the dozen or so "careers", listed for Shakespeare from the 9<sup>th</sup> edition (1980) until the 16<sup>th</sup> edition (1993) when, after some flux, they were all discontinued and finally subsumed under the more general - **biography** subdivision.

#### 4.2 "Authorship" as main heading and subdivision.

Initially (1910-1926), the main heading **Authorship** covered somewhat disparate items: classes of writers, literary forms or genres, as well as writing techniques. A later scope note (in the 8<sup>th</sup> edition, 1975) clarified that it was meant (1) to apply to authoring and to a variety of writing guides and techniques (general or specialized) and, (2) to be “used as a subdivision under the individual name of authors or works, in cases of dubious or disputed authorship” – which is directly relevant to the present discussion. One example given for this latter usage is Shakespeare.

As early as 1917 in the *Preliminary List of Literary Subject Headings* (3<sup>rd</sup> issue), and 1918-19 in the 2nd edition of *Subject Headings Used in the Dictionary Catalogues of the Library of Congress* the subdivision - **authorship** is already associated with the second-level subdivision - **Baconian theory**.

After 1920, in the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> editions of *Literature Subject Headings with List of Shakespeare Collections and Language Subject Headings*, and in the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of *Subject Headings Used in the Dictionary Catalogues of the Library of Congress* (1928), it also carries the subsidiary subdivision - **collaboration**.

In the 5<sup>th</sup> edition of the *Subject Headings Used in the Dictionary Catalogues of the Library of Congress* (1948) the secondary subdivision - **Oxford theory** is introduced for the first time, 28 years after the theory was first proposed. It was followed in 1957 (6<sup>th</sup> edition) by the - **Derby theory** among the alternative claims noted by the LC. In the 8<sup>th</sup> edition of the *Library of Congress Subject Headings* (1975), the list of alternative theories has been enlarged again, to include - **Burton theory**, and - **Marlowe theory**. The next addition, - **Rutland theory**, will appear only in the 31<sup>st</sup> Edition, in 2009, a gap of 34 years.<sup>51</sup>

As of 2021, the List of Free-Floating Subdivisions<sup>52</sup> specified the following:

### – Authorship

Use as a topical subdivision under individual works entered under title, under disciplines and under literary, motion picture, radio, television, and video forms and genres. *Also use under names of individual persons for works on the attribution of authorship of works to the person* [italics added].

We also note that the LCSH illustrates the use of the subdivision *authorship* with the compound heading **Shakespeare, William, 1564-1616--Authorship**

#### **4.3 Other headings or subdivisions**

There are four other headings of potential relevance to the SAQ, as well as to the issue of the Shakespeare apocrypha and unsettled additions to the canon.

#### **Authorship, Disputed**

It is listed in the 8<sup>th</sup> edition (1975) of the LCSH and clarified in later editions to this day with the following cross-references (“SA, see also”):

SA      subdivision Authorship under names of individual persons and individual works entered under title, e.g. **Shakespeare, William, 1564-1616 – Authorship; Beowulf – Authorship**; and subdivision Spurious and doubtful works under names of individual persons, e.g. **Shakespeare, William, 1564-1616 – Spurious and doubtful works**.

#### **Spurious and doubtful works**

This does not exist as a standalone heading in the LC Subject Headings (S Section), but is found as a free-floating subdivision, as published in the latest (2021) List of Free-Floating Subdivisions. This heading covers mostly attribution studies, i.e. the contested and evolving attribution of a work to a person, or in case of collaboration, of passages to one collaborator or another and is used “as a topical subdivision under names of individual persons for works that discuss works attributed to a person at a previous time.”

or “as a form subdivision under names of individual persons for collections of works attributed to a person at a previous time.”

### **Anonyms and pseudonyms**

**Anonyms and pseudonyms** has been used since the 1910 *List of Subject Headings*, with cross references to **Anagrams, Homonymous authors, Imaginary books and libraries and Fictitious imprints**, and in the 1957 edition (6th) additionally to **Fictitious names, Noms de plume, Pseudonyms**.

In 1980, it appeared as a subdivision under the main **Shakespeare, William 1564-1616** heading (LCSH, 9th Edition) and by 2021 (43<sup>rd</sup> edition), the main heading entry listed the non-preferred variants as **Assumed names, Fictitious names, Noms de plume, Pen names, Pseudonyms, Anagrams**, along with a few related terms. The 2021 List of Free-Floating Subdivisions instructs catalogers to “Use as a topical subdivision under names of individual persons”.

Catalogers use this as a main subject heading in bibliographical records for scholarly studies of pseudonymity, such as Marcy North’s *Anonymous Renaissance*, which is tagged in OCLC’s WorldCat catalog with – inter alia – **Anonyms and pseudonyms, English – History – 16<sup>th</sup> century**. When dealing with the use of an assumed name by an author, they insert the corresponding subdivision under that author’s name.

### **Literary forgeries and mystifications**

As a main subject heading, the related term, **Literary forgeries and mystifications** is intriguing. “Mystification” could, indeed, be viewed as approximating what some authorship doubters suspect was involved posthumously in the attribution of authorship



to Shakspeare of Stratford, in particular in the design and paratext of the *First Folio*, were it not for its inapt connotations of temporary mischief (the authorial misattribution proved rather momentous and long-lasting). Furthermore, the coupling of the term with “Literary forgeries” makes it unfit to describe the SAQ since the issue of the fabrication of literary texts does not play a significant role in this discourse; only the issue of confusion around the identity of the hidden author(s) is central to it.

Already present as a main heading in the first edition (1910/1914) of *Subject Headings Used in the Dictionary Catalogues of the Library of Congress* (with cross-references to **Bookbinding forgeries, Curiosa, Imaginary books and libraries, Pasticcio, etc.**), from the 34<sup>th</sup> edition (2012) to the 43<sup>rd</sup> (2021) it is meant to cover “Literary frauds, hoaxes and mystifications, and is related to other terms such as Authorship, Literary errors and blunders, Forgery, Literary curiosa, Imaginary books and libraries, Pasticcio.” The scope note states: “Here are entered works on literature of spurious authorship. Works on forgery as a theme in literature are entered under Forgery in literature.”

Whereas the study of attribution of a particular work (anonymous, spurious or doubtful) to a particular author is thus fully reflected in the LC headings by these four headings or subdivisions, works concerning the *search for the identity* of authors hiding behind pseudonyms and allonyms is described in cataloging records by the subject heading "Pseudonyms and anonyms" or by attaching to the author's name the subdivision "Authorship". Only the LC NAF are designed to link a pseudonym to a real name.

#### ***4.4 Concluding remarks***

A close examination of the various headings and subdivisions of possible relevance to the SAQ elicits a few observations.

The plethora of biographical labels (“political, military, translating, editing, teaching, espionage careers, etc.,”) which had accreted between the years 1980-1993 under the heading **Shakespeare, William, 1564-1616** – and which certainly cannot on the basis of the historical record be claimed to apply to Shakspeare of Stratford – were probably introduced only because the heading and its subdivisions, is meant to serve as a template, or pattern heading, for describing other authors’ lives and careers.<sup>53</sup> Similarly, the subdivision -- **library**, an expected item in any writer’s environment, is, in the case of Shakspeare, totally unjustified given the glaring absence of any mention of books in his will. Yet, once appointed a “writer”, he now benefits in the LCSH from the assumptions usually associated with writers, i.e. that they own and read books. This illustrates the assertion of factuality implicit in the LC lists that is actually absent in the historical record. Recalling Hjørland’s discussion of philosophical realism, we must ask: if a label exists, isn’t it testimony that the thing it tags exists (or existed) also?

Conversely, the absence of the obvious label “business career” (or some such) which would neatly recapitulate the commercial activities that are indeed *the only documented activities* of Shakspeare in the historical record (such as money-lending, lawsuits to recover debts and real estate transactions) makes the real – and dissonant – aspects of his biography as a presumed writer simply vanish.

In addition to the subheading – Authorship, the four index terms described above (either as headings or subdivisions) can be considered as possible access points to works that convey doubt or dispute regarding authorship. As well, the main subdivision (“Authorship”) of the Shakespeare heading, to which all non-Stratfordian research is circumscribed, has long given pride of place to the “Bacon theory”.<sup>54</sup> The underlying problem with the entire construction of **Shakespeare, William - 1564-1616** –

**Authorship – [XX] theory** is that those writers who propose alternative authorial candidates for the *works* of Shakespeare are universally joined in the belief that the man with those birth dates was *not* the author; accordingly, their theories concern the *origin of those works*, and not the life and work of that specific named individual. To the extent that Shakspere is addressed in these works at all, it is only to disqualify and eliminate him as a viable author.

As we have seen, the authorship question is founded on the reasonable and well-grounded premise that “Shakespeare” (with or without a hyphen) was the pseudonym of a concealed poet<sup>55</sup> (and/or a group of writers), for whose identity several candidates have been proposed. The mere fact that the authorship question is currently nested under the entry for *only one* of the possible candidates, i.e. Shakspere of Stratford, reproduces the mainstream view and fails to distinguish between the “author function” and the person of record; we suggest that these headings make it difficult for catalogers to fulfil their ethical role in accurately representing the topic of the works they seek to describe.

## **5.0 Extant LCSH Assignments of Selected Stratfordian and Anti-Stratfordian/Oxfordian Publications**

To demonstrate the extent to which these subject headings inadvertently disguise and deform the aboutness of works related to the Authorship Question, we shall next examine a sample of authorship-related books and the headings that were assigned to them. Again, we accept that these works were catalogued in good faith given the availability of extant headings; what is of concern is the lack of appropriately flexible headings that distinguish the historical personages involved, as well as the framework in which to situate the various relevant theories.

We consulted the WorldCat online catalog, and looked up "*Shakespeare*" Identified in *Edward De Vere, the Seventeenth Earl of Oxford*, J. Thomas Looney's 1920 book which pioneered the Oxfordian theory. It is labelled with the following subject headings and subdivisions:

- **Shakespeare, William, 1564-1616 – Authorship**
- **Oxford, Edward De Vere, Earl of, 1550-1604**
- **Shakespeare, William, 1564-1616 – Authorship – Oxford theory**

We can see that the user is left to assume that Shakspere is the same as the author Shakespeare, whose authorship is being discussed. The same pattern of labelling choices holds true for Charlton Ogburn Jr's 1984 classic *The Mysterious William Shakespeare: The Myth and the Reality; mutatis mutandis* for works on other authorship theories.

Consider the subject headings for Ramon Jiménez's 2018 *Shakespeare's Apprenticeship: Identifying the Real Playwright's Earliest Works*, which argues that five anonymous plays were Shakespeare's early efforts at playwriting ("juvenilia"), which he later revised and expanded and which became the "canonical" plays:

- **Shakespeare, William, 1564-1616 – Authorship**
- **Shakespeare, William, 1564-1616 – Criticism and interpretation**
- **Authorship**

These applied headings are rather misleading: Jiménez is discussing plays the dates for which (mostly from the 1580s) implicitly *rule out Shakspere as the author*, whose (supposed) career in London started only in the 1590s. Yet Jiménez's book is labelled as

if the plays under investigation were written by the Stratford businessman, thereby contradicting his “official” biography. This example illustrates the logical tangle that the unthinking adoption of Stratfordian assumptions creates for catalogers and readers.

To cite another example, Mark Anderson’s *Shakespeare by Another Name: The Biography of Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford, the Man who was Shakespeare* is, as its subtitle suggests, a straightforward literary biography of Edward de Vere as Shakespeare, and devotes no attention whatever to debunking the traditional biography of Shakespeare as Shakespeare. It is nonetheless assigned the headings

- **Oxford, Edward De Vere, Earl of, 1550-1604.**
- **Shakespeare, William, 1564-1616 – Authorship – Oxford theory.**
- **Oxford, Edward De Vere, Earl of, 1550-1604 – Authorship.**

While we appreciate the primacy given to Oxford in these headings, the book’s content is still described in terms of its theoretical relationship with a named individual who is not, in fact, its subject, rather than in association with literary works.

Similarly, Richard Roe in his *The Shakespeare Guide to Italy* argues that the detailed descriptions of that country in the plays indicate that Shakespeare the author (whom he does not associate with any candidate) must have visited Italy, so the poet-playwright could not have been the untravelled Stratford man. Yet, the LC subject headings are:

- **Shakespeare, William, 1564-1616 -- Knowledge and learning.**
- **Shakespeare, William, 1564-1616 -- Criticism and interpretation.**

Describing Roe's book with these headings confounds his intentions and misrepresents his subject matter.

Even ostensibly Stratfordian publications suffer from inadequate descriptions. The subject headings for James Shapiro's 2010 *Contested Will: Who wrote Shakespeare?*, an attempted debunking by a Stratfordian of rival authorship theories, are:

- **Shakespeare, William, 1564-1616 – Authorship**
- **Shakespeare, William, 1564-1616 – Authorship – Baconian theory**
- **Shakespeare, William, 1564-1616 – Authorship – Oxford theory**

In this standard and recurring hierarchy of subject headings, there is no recognition that Shapiro's candidate (Shakspere) is precisely what is in doubt and that Shapiro's preferred (Stratford) theory is only one among others, including those championing Bacon and Oxford. A heading dedicated to the SAQ in general would also be most appropriate.

Finally, let us consider Hank Whittemore's 2005 book *The Monument*, which interprets *The Sonnets* as reflecting the biography of Edward de Vere; at no point does the author consider these to be the work of Shakspere of Stratford. Yet the subject headings assigned are:

- **Shakespeare, William, 1564-1616 - Authorship - Oxford theory**
- **Oxford, Edward De Vere, Earl of, 1550-1604 - Authorship**
- **Shakespeare, William, 1564-1616**

While we grant the second heading is an appropriate use of the application of the subheading “Authorship,” the first heading gives primacy to the very person this book is *not* about, while the third is essentially a *non sequitur*.

In conclusion, we argue that it is inaccurate and inappropriate to tag publications demonstrating the implausibility of Shakspere’s authorship and the probability of another writer’s authorship with headings which, by their very formulation, reassert - as if unquestioned - Shakspere’s authorship, thereby ignoring the aboutness of the text and effectively disallowing the very existence and legitimacy of the debate. This wouldn’t be a grave problem if catalogers only had to process a rare, “errant” book once in a decade or so: they could not be expected to revise their subject hierarchy or terminology for one anomaly. But they are now dealing with hundreds of scholarly studies on a topic that is of long standing and keen interest to the reading public and are still constrained in their subject analysis by a skewed and dated controlled vocabulary. Reforming the NAF and LCSH would therefore seem in order. So far, however, the hegemony that Stratfordianism retains by default in academia and other established cultural institutions has precluded such a re-examination and kept the LC authorities out of step with the latest developments in this field. It is to the project of correcting these oversights that we now turn.

## **6.0. LC Subject Headings for SOAR: Adaptation and experimentation**

In an effort to help users of SOAR retrieve all the records dealing with suitably narrow, specific topics, we (BB, CH) needed some kind of “tagging” system and standardized subject headings. Rather than electing to follow the current, informal, tagging practice for publications on the Internet, we opted for something of a hybrid approach, incorporating as much as feasible existing library conventions for subject headings but adding “local” labels as needed. The progressive addition of searchable abstracts and excerpts in the

catalog records is meant to make the content of the articles more visible to users but the frequency of variants produces results that can be unpredictable, depending on which search string is entered by the user.

After culling the recurring words or catch-phrases associated with various Oxfordian topics, arguments, evidence, anecdotes and theories in all published articles found in SOAR, we checked them against the LCSH to see if the Library of Congress had a usable label answering our needs. Indeed, the LCSH lists often proposed relevant general headings, in particular for major historical events or features, and these are therefore the first guideposts we select to orient users. Unsurprisingly, however, the LCSH has nothing for more narrow topics or obscure anecdotes of crucial evidentiary value in the authorship debate, or for more specific lines of inquiry which are of direct interest to our users. For these, we had to formulate and standardize our own “local” labels.

For personal names (+titles and dates), we use Hollis (Harvard University Library online catalog), the Folger Shakespeare Library catalog or sometimes *Wikipedia* as sources to populate the 600 fields and apply the standard LCSH biographical subdivisions as much as possible in the \$a, \$c, \$d, \$l, \$t, \$y, and \$z subfields, though we depart from the LCSH in syntax, particularly in the positioning of the \$y and \$z subfields within a subject heading string. We occasionally take liberties and use for specifically Oxfordian tags the \$x fields (more rarely the \$z field). For example:

**\$aBurghley, William Cecil, \$cBaron, \$d1520-1598 \$tPrecepts for the Well  
Ordering and Carriage of a Man's Life \$y1616, 1637**  
**\$aOxford, Edward de Vere, \$cEarl of, \$d1550-1604 \$xHomes and haunts  
\$y1575-1576 \$zVenice**



**\$aOxford, Anne Cecil Vere, \$cCountess of, \$d1556-1588 \$xSexual behavior**

**\$aOxford, Edward De Vere, \$cEarl of, 1550-1604, \$xChildhood and youth +  
\$xWardship [Oxfordian label]**

For the authorial name introducing titles of the Shakespearean canon, we have reluctantly and tentatively reverted to the old LC usage regarding pseudonyms, pending an official reform of the LC NAF and LCSH formally establishing Shakspere and Shakespeare as separate entities in the LC NAF. For example:

**\$aShakespeare, William [pseud.] \$tHamlet \$xCriticism and interpretation**

Similarly, the 650 field (subject) is used both for standard LC headings and for specific, and narrower, “local” Oxfordian ones, ,which sometimes means “commandeering” the \$x or \$z field and abandoning the standard LCSH syntax. For example:

**\$a Vendetta \$z England \$y16th century + \$x Knyvet-Oxford feud [Oxfordian label]**

**\$a Literary patrons + \$zFisher’s Folly [Oxfordian label]**

**\$aTheater in propaganda \$z England \$y16th century + \$xPolicy of plays [Oxfordian label]**

**\$aLibel and slander \$z England \$y16th century + \$xArundel-Howard libels [Oxfordian label]**

The 690 field is used for bundles of variant labels in the absence of support for authority records in the LibraryWorld OPAC platform on which the SOAR catalog is currently mounted.

These additions and adaptations have still proved insufficient, leading the authors to develop a more substantive approach to reforming the LCSH. A starting point for our purposes has been the adoption on the part of catalogers over the past decade, of the RDA (Resource Description and Access) standard for cataloging, which has opened the doors for revisiting the issue of some past LC practices regarding name authorities and the use of pseudonyms. In effect, there is now much more flexibility in how the authority records can work.<sup>56</sup>

An FAQ document on the Library of Congress website gives many examples of how to set up authority records for numerous types of pseudonym situations. The document “FAQ – LC/PCC practice for creating NARs for persons who use pseudonyms” asks and answers a number of questions for how to use RDA standards for such new records.<sup>57</sup> Some of the examples are intended for instances of either one individual using multiple pseudonyms to multiple individuals using one pseudonym. The FAQ has examples of both, ranging from William Shakspeare of Stratford hypothetically using the pen name “Shakespeare”, to Edward de Vere or any of a number of others (Sir Francis Bacon, Christopher Marlowe, etc.) using the pseudonym “Shakespeare,” to even a number of individuals all using one pseudonym. This latter example is how Delia Bacon, in her *The Philosophy of the Plays of Shakspeare Unfolded* (1857), had originally considered the Shakespeare problem, i.e. that multiple individuals contributed, all using the one pseudonym, “William Shakespeare.” And some mainstream scholars today (most notably in the case of *The New Oxford Shakespeare* editions) are now revisiting the entire

SAQ issue in their own way, with collaborators now seen as writing some of the canon. For example, Christopher Marlowe is now credited as a co-author of *Henry VI*, and is considered one of several “putative” authors or collaborators (along with Shakspere) of a least two other plays (*Edward III*, and *Arden of Faversham*).<sup>58</sup>

Another layer of description available to catalogers is Faceted Application of Subject Terminology (or FAST) developed beginning in 1998 as part of an LC-OCLC collaboration. FAST is built with the purpose of capturing various facets of topics as opposed to being structured hierarchically as subsidiaries of singular, higher-level headings. It has been used to good effect to correct some of the issues identified above: for example, the 2006 adoption of *Oxford-Shakespeare controversy* as an alternative to *Shakespeare, William–1564-1616–Authorship–Oxford theory* is a decided improvement, in that it legitimatizes Oxfordian scholarship through its own heading.

Still, substantial reform is needed in this area. We propose the following:

**Proposal #1:** The LC Name Authority **Shakespeare, William, 1564-1616** should be changed to "**Shakspere, William, 1564-1616**", reinstating the spelling of the name as it was used during that individual’s lifetime on legal documents, and as it often was used until the 20th Century. We further recommend supplementing this new authority with the label **Shakespeare, William**, with no birth or death dates indicated.

**Rationale:** The headings should reflect a distinction between *Shakspere*, the historic individual of record (and one of the authorship contenders), from *Shakespeare*, from Shakespeare, the alleged pseudonym that fulfils the Foucauldian "author function", so that all biographical literature concerning the

historic record may be distinguished from those addressing the plays, poems etc., which would be indexed under a new heading indicating the author of the works.

Under this new heading, the subsidiary LC headings applying to the Stratford man's biography-would be recycled as the LC has them. Conversely, the biography, career and known works (i.e. published under his own name), of Edward de Vere are described following the same LC scheme. That practice would hold with any other candidate.

Under the dateless **Shakespeare, William** heading would belong all the works relating to the Shakespearean canon, regardless of authorship theory (Stratfordian, Oxfordian, etc.). The subdivisions falling under the categories of criticism and interpretation and derivative cultural production (see Section 4.1 above) are therefore also reassigned to this heading. While the AACR2 manual and RDA guidelines do provide for explanations of pseudonyms and contested identities in the 6xx notes of authority records, the SOAR catalog has no authority records available. Therefore, given the significant change we are making in SOAR to use a heading for "Shakespeare, William" that is being treated as a pseudonym, we have opted instead to use the now out-dated term "[pseud.]" in our records to make it crystal clear to our users that we are treating the name as a pseudonym (e.g., "Shakespeare, William [pseud.]. For some examples of how a revised NAF for "Shakespeare, William" might function, we can look at the LC authority record for Martin Marprelate – the pseudonymous author(s) of tracts distributed illegally between 1588-89 – features a 667 note,

Identity of Martin Marprelate has been attributed to various people, i.e. Job Throckmorton, Sir Robert Williams, and John Penry with help from others. Martin Junior and Martin Senior may or may not be the same with M. Marprelate. Cf.

Stonehill, C.A. Anonyma and pseudonyma; Wilson, J.D. Martin Marprelate and Shakespeare's Fluellen; Carlson, L. Martin Marprelate, gentleman.

For more recent usage, consider the authority record for Smithee, Alan, the name used in motion picture credits by directors wishing to have their names removed from productions they wish to disown. Its 6xx note reads,

Pseudonym used by multiple persons; for works of authors known to have used this name search also under: |b Bogart, Paul, |b Oristrell, Joaquín |b Windsor, Terry |b Wong, Che-Kirk, 1949- |b Totten, Robert, 1937-1995

A 500 explanatory note field in the cataloging record could easily then provide context for the dateless **Shakespeare, William** heading, explaining to researchers that the identity behind this name is uncertain and contested.

Proposal #2: There should be a general heading for the **Shakespeare authorship question** itself, denoting the discourse and debate over the authorship of the Shakespeare works.

**Rationale:** Such a heading would enable more accurate indexing of works concerning the debate *as a discourse* and more importantly as a legitimate field of inquiry.

This new heading would have been an appropriate indexing term to apply to James Shapiro's book *Contested Will* described above. This would then support subsidiary headings such as – **History**; – **Education**; - **Study and teaching**; – **Debates and debating** etc. There would then be further subdivisions focusing specific authorship theories such as:

- **Bacon theory**
- **Collaboration**
- **Marlowe theory**
- **Neville theory**
- **North theory**
- **Oxford theory**
- **Stratford theory.**

With such enriched sets of terms in place, let us now re-examine the books described above (bearing in mind that supplementary headings or subdivisions would likely be needed to more fully describe the books).

Looney, J. Thomas. *"Shakespeare" Identified in Edward De Vere, the Seventeenth Earl of Oxford* .

- **Shakspere, William, 1564-1616**
- **Oxford, Edward De Vere, Earl of, 1550-1604**
- **Shakespeare, William**
- **Shakespeare authorship question– Oxford theory**

Anderson, Mark. *Shakespeare by Another Name: The Biography of Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford, the Man who was Shakespeare*

- **Oxford, Edward De Vere, Earl of, 1550-1604**
- **Shakespeare authorship question – Oxford theory**

Jiménez, Ramon. *Shakespeare's Apprenticeship: Identifying the Real Playwright's Earliest Works*

- **Shakespeare, William – Criticism and interpretation**
- **Shakespeare, William – Chronology**
- **Oxford, Edward De Vere, Earl of, 1550-1604**

Roe, Richard. *The Shakespeare Guide to Italy: Retracing the Bard's Unknown Travels*

- **Shakespeare, William – Knowledge**
- **Shakespeare, William – Travel – Italy**

Shapiro, James. *Contested Will: Who wrote Shakespeare?*

- **Shakspere, William, 1564-1616**
- **Shakespeare, William**
- **Oxford, Edward De Vere, Earl of, 1550-1604**
- **St Alban, Francis Bacon, Viscount, 1561-1626**
- **Shakespeare authorship question**

Hank Whittemore. *The Monument,*

- **Oxford, Edward De Vere, Earl of, 1550-1604**
- **Southampton, Henry Wriothesley, Earl of, 1573-1624**
- **Shakespeare, William – Sonnets**
- **Shakespeare authorship question – Oxford theory**

We argued that these titles are currently inadequately and inaccurately described; our proposals offer, we believe, an elegant solution: where Shakspere the individual of record is addressed in the text, there is a heading with birth and death dates; where the Earl of Oxford is the sole subject, this heading is not included, replaced instead with the heading **Shakespeare authorship question**, which will direct the interested researcher searching for literature on the works of Shakespeare. And the heading **Shakespeare, William** is also applied in those cases where a work addresses the works themselves without making any claim as to the historical identity of their author.

Because this paper is addressing LCSH as it relates to the SAQ, which is a matter of attribution but also of biography, we must take into account how these new headings would affect mainstream, Stratfordian biographies that accept the Stratford biographical narrative. Consider for example Stephen Greenblatt's *Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare* (2005), Peter Ackroyd's *Shakespeare: The Biography* (2006) and *Shakespeare: A Life* (1998) by Park Honan, and *The life of William Shakespeare: A Critical Biography* (2012) by Lois Potter, all of which are presently assigned the headings:

**Shakespeare, William – 1564-1616**

**Dramatists, English Early modern – 1500-1700 – Biography**

Consistent with our proposal – and the naming practice that prevailed in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century – the first heading would simply be replaced with **Shakspere, William – 1564-1616**, supplemented with the identity-neutral **Shakespeare, William**. We suggest that these approaches will make the authorship literature much more accessible, without negatively affecting or unduly biasing the indexing of conventional biographical literature.



In sum, to implement these changes, the Library of Congress would need to:

- 1). Remove the variant heading "Shakspere, William 1564-1616" (and other variants such as "Shakspeare, William, 1564-1616", etc.) from the authority record for the current "Shakespeare, William, 1564-1616" and establish it with a new authority record of its own;
- 2). Remove the date qualifier "1564-1616" from the "Shakespeare, William, 1564-1616" authorized form; and
- 3). Link the two authority records, "Shakespeare, William" and "Shakspere, William, 1564-1616" to one another through 500 "See Also From" fields.
- 4.) LC would need to establish a major new top-level heading, "Shakespeare authorship question," and all discussion of the authorship debate itself, as well as all headings related to proposed alternative candidates and theories, would appear here.

We are cognizant of the fact that these changes would have significant repercussions for the Library of Congress and may require other systematic changes, given the centrality of Shakespeare to global literature and culture. Yet we believe that, for ontological, pragmatic and ethical reasons, they are very much worth considering.

## **7.0 Conclusions**

The LC NAF and LCSH concerning the biography and authorship of Shakespeare are out-of-date and do not reflect accurately and neutrally the state of the research conducted as part of the SAQ which is, as a result, distorted and constrained by Stratfordian assumptions, assertions and practices. These headings, in not reflecting the aboutness of anti-Stratfordian and Oxfordian books, risk misleading readers away from these sources and are in effect dismissing as inconsequential the research of heterodox scholars.

Following Brubaker, Hjørland and Dousa, a pragmatist approach seems clearly warranted, along with an awareness of how social epistemology further reveals that the signifier "Shakespeare" refers to drastically different individuals for the Stratfordian than it does for the Oxfordian. The former is a common-born and thrifty "natural genius" who

only wrote for money and who apparently cared so little for his supposed life's works that he made no provision to publish them; while the latter is an erudite, charismatic, well-travelled and temperamental aristocrat who attracted and gathered other talented writers around him, spurring the English Renaissance, but whose authorship remained concealed, likely for political reasons. With diverse epistemic communities holding such divergent views on the man behind this name, the single index term *Shakespeare, William – 1564-1616* is inadequate, inaccurate, and exclusive.

Furthermore, a philosophically realist perspective would start by recognizing the objective reality of the existence of William Shakspere of Stratford-upon-Avon *as documented in extant sources* as well as the existence of Quarto and Folio texts of plays whose author is identified as William Shakespeare, but would, in the absence of documentary evidence in hand from the time that suggests these two entities were connected, *make no attempt to associate one with the other*. Present indexing, by contrast, qualifies as what Hjørland refers to as antirealist or idealist, for the proposition that William Shakspere was the playwright Shakespeare is only that – a proposition, an inference drawn *generations after the fact* that became a tradition and then “common knowledge” – creating an individual who is in effect a social construct and cultural icon but lacks adequate historical grounding.

Subject assignment informed by philosophical realism would, as a result, default to a skeptical stance where all claims to authorship are concerned, and require sufficient evidence to support them. Such a position would accord Shakspere's candidacy the same consideration as those of Oxford, Bacon, Marlowe, and others, and this would be reflected in the terminologies used in subject indexes and in how they were structured.

So that they would be useful to communities of researchers investigating the SAQ or studying the relationship of alternative candidates such as Edward de Vere to the Shakespeare works, the proposed new pragmatic, fallibilist index terms are needed in order to describe the “state of knowledge” and related discourses in the ongoing debate over the authorship of the Shakespeare canon. This provisionality should then extend equally to subject headings related to “traditional” biographies of Shakespeare that take for granted the identification of the Stratfordian businessman as the author. With both named individuals and subject headings thus reformed, the literature related to the SAQ and authorship theories concerning Oxford, Bacon, Marlowe, and others become much more accessible to the interested library user, thus enabling new research, interpretation, scholarship, and publications. As Hjørland (2004) puts it, “the most important function of libraries and information systems is to enable critical users to question established knowledge and investigate alternative views”.<sup>59</sup> Stated this way, it is clearly an ethical imperative that library metadata better represent this field of research for those engaged in it so as to make it more widely available, and to encourage its further production.

Finally, making the formal distinction in the NAF and LCSH between the names *Shakspere* and *Shakespeare* would recognize what Foucault referred to as the “author function” of the latter name and its attendant power to denote and classify the corpus of the canon, but – significantly – explicitly *reject* this possibility in the case of the former. In other words, given the lack of positive evidence to the contrary, the name *William Shakspere* possesses no author function. This acknowledgment would have profound implications for the perceived legitimacy of the Shakespeare authorship question as a field of inquiry.

Whether the Library of Congress would be amenable to a modification of the LC NAF and LCSH along the general lines described above remains to be seen, as it may have implications for other cases of contested authorship.<sup>60 61</sup> Whether Oxfordians (and other skeptics) are ready through their organizations to tackle the difficult process needed to elaborate and submit a formal proposal addressing the issues - which affect equally all alternate authorship theories - is also uncertain. But the discrepancy between the present formulation and organization of the Shakespeare subject heading and the current state of research into the authorship question makes a reckoning inevitable in the not-too distant future. There is ample cultural warrant to justify accounting for the existence of the SAQ in cataloguing and the evidence for different authorship theories, and an ethical imperative to do so.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Andrea E. Mays, *The Millionaire and the Bard : Henry Folger's Obsessive Hunt for Shakespeare's First Folio*. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2016), xv.

<sup>2</sup> Michael Dudley, "Liberating Knowledge at the Margins: Towards a Discursive-Transactional Research Paradigm in LS." *Canadian Journal of Urban Research* 5 (2019).

<sup>3</sup> See <https://shakespeareoxfordfellowship.org/soar/>

<sup>4</sup> SOAR is currently made available on the LibraryWorld OPAC platform.

<sup>5</sup> Supporting the claim that Edward de Vere, 17<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford, wrote under the pseudonym "Shakespeare."

<sup>6</sup> See <http://shakespeareoxfordlibrary.org/>

<sup>7</sup> Hugh Trevor-Roper. "What's in a Name?" *Réalités* (Nov. 1962): 41.

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- <sup>8</sup> Diana Price, *Shakespeare's Unorthodox Biography: New Evidence of an Authorship Problem*. (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2001).
- <sup>9</sup> Peter A. Sturrock and Kathleen E. Erickson. "Behind The Mask: Decoding the Dedication of Shakespeare's Sonnets." *Journal of Scientific Exploration* 34, no. 2 (2020).
- <sup>10</sup> Wildenthal, Bryan H., *Early Shakespeare Authorship Doubts*. (Zindabad Press, 2019).
- <sup>11</sup> For two examples of cryptic allusions to an authorship mystification, see Alexander Waugh, "A Secret Revealed: William Covell and his Polimanteia (1595)" in *De Vere Society Newsletter*, (October 2013): 2-5; and Alexander Waugh, "John Weever – Another Anti-Stratfordian," in *De Vere Society Newsletter* (May 2014).
- <sup>12</sup> Marcy North, *The Anonymous Renaissance: Cultures of discretion in Tudor-Stuart England*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003). See also Annabel Patterson, *Censorship and Interpretation: The Conditions of Writing and Reading in Early Modern England*. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984).
- <sup>13</sup> Wildenthal, 136-8.
- <sup>14</sup> Jan Cole, "Who was 'the late English Ovid'?" *De Vere Society Newsletter* (May 2014): 24-28; see also Cole 24-8; Wildenthal, 68-70.
- <sup>15</sup> Price, 309-313
- <sup>16</sup> A.D. Nuttal, *Shakespeare the Thinker* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007): 191, 18.
- <sup>17</sup> Richard F. Whalen, "Look not on this Picture: Ambiguity in the Shakespeare First Folio", in *The 1623 Shakespeare First Folio: A Minority Report*, (Special Issue of *Brief Chronicles*), (2016): 47-59, 52-3.
- <sup>18</sup> J.T. Looney. *Shakespeare Identified in Edward de Vere, the 17th Earl of Oxford*. (Cary, N.C.: Veritas Publications, 1920/2019).

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- <sup>19</sup> For a detailed treatment of these parallels, see Charlton Ogburn Jr. *The Mysterious William Shakespeare: The Myth and the Reality*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. (McLean (Va.): EPM, 1992).
- <sup>20</sup> For a biography of Edward de Vere as Shakespeare, see Mark Anderson, *Shakespeare by Another Name: The Biography of Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford, the Man who was Shakespeare*. (New York : Gotham Books, 2005).
- <sup>21</sup> Or Shake-speare: the occasional hyphenation of the authorial name on the title page is a strong clue that it is a pseudonym, following the common pattern of verb + noun: Smell-knave, Tell-troth, Mar-prelate.
- <sup>22</sup> North, 26-7.
- <sup>23</sup> Charles Knight. *William Shakspeare, a Biography: Forming a Companion Volume to the National Edition of the Pictorial Shakspeare* (London : C. Knight, 1851), 325.  
<https://archive.org/details/williamshakspeare00knigrich/page/325/mode/1up>
- <sup>24</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>25</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>26</sup> See William Boyle, “Wikipedia Wars,” *Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter* (vol. 10 #3, Summer 2011).
- <sup>27</sup> “Spelling of Shakespeare’s Name” (New York Times, Dec. 27, 1879)  
<https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1879/12/27/93908122.pdf>.
- <sup>28</sup> Anthony J. Pointon, *The Man Who Was Never Shakespeare: The Theft of William Shakspeare's Identity*. (Tunbridge Wells: Parapress, 2011), 18.
- <sup>29</sup> George Greenwood, *The Shakespeare Problem Restated*. (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press), 1970.

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- <sup>30</sup> James A. Warren, *Shakespeare Revolutionized : The First Hundred Years of J. Thomas Looney's "'Shakespeare" Identified'*. (Cary, North Carolina: Veritas Publications, 2021).
- <sup>31</sup> Irvin L. Matus, *Shakespeare, in Fact* (New York : Continuum, 1994), 26.
- <sup>32</sup> For an unusually candid look by a Stratfordian at the various defensive strategies commonly deployed by orthodox scholars to dismiss or denigrate the dissenters' arguments, see: Bruce Danner, "The Anonymous Shakespeare: Heresy, Authorship and the Anxiety of Orthodoxy." In *Anonymity in Early Modern England: What's in a Name?* eds. Janet Wright Starner and Barbara Howard Traister. (London: Routledge, 2016 2011).
- <sup>33</sup> Although see Michael Dudley, "Knowledge Ill-Inhabited: The Subjugation of post-Stratfordian scholarship in Academic Libraries." *The Oxfordian XXVII* (2015).
- <sup>34</sup> Jana Brubaker, "Ambiguous Authorship and Uncertain Authenticity: A Cataloger's Dilemma." *Cataloging and classification quarterly* (34 no. 4, 2002), 28.
- <sup>35</sup> Brubaker, 28.
- <sup>36</sup> Hjørland, Birger. "Towards a Theory of Aboutness, Subject, Topicality, Theme, Domain, Field, Content... and Relevance." *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology* 52.9 (2001), 776.
- <sup>37</sup> Birger Hjørland, "Indexing: Concepts and theory." *KO Knowledge Organization* 45, no. 7 (2018): 609-639.
- <sup>38</sup> Jesse H. Shera, "Classification as the basis of bibliographic organization." In *Bibliographic Organization: Papers presented before the Fifteenth Annual Conference of the Graduate Library School July 24-29, 1950*, ed. Jesse H. Shera and Margaret E. Egan. (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1951).
- <sup>39</sup> Clare Beghtol, "Ethical decision-making for knowledge representation and organization systems for global use." *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology* 56, no. 9 (2005): 904

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<sup>40</sup> Thomas M. Dousa, "Classical Pragmatism and its Varieties: On a Pluriform Metatheoretical Perspective for Knowledge Organization", *Knowledge Organization*, 37(1), 2010: 65-71, at 68-69.

<sup>41</sup> Hjørland 2018, 616 (italics added).

<sup>42</sup> Birger Hjørland, "Subject (of Documents)." *Knowledge Organization* 44 (2017): 55-64.

<sup>43</sup> Quoted in Dousa 2008, 245.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Birger Hjørland, "Arguments for Philosophical Realism in Library and Information Science." *Library Trends* 52.3 (2004): 488-506.

<sup>46</sup> Hjørland 2004.

<sup>47</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Foucault Reader*. (P. Rabinow, Ed.) (First). Pantheon Books, 1984, 106.

<sup>48</sup> Foucault, 107.

<sup>49</sup> The editions of the Library of Congress Authorities were consulted through the HathiTrust (<https://www.hathitrust.org/>) and the Library of Congress website; for a complete list of editions cited, see Appendix 1.

<sup>50</sup> See <https://lcn.loc.gov/n78095332>

<sup>51</sup> More recent theories involving other contenders such as Neville, Florio, North, Sackville are not listed.

<sup>52</sup> The Library of Congress began to create subdivision authority records to control free-floating topical, form, and chronological subdivisions in 1999. They are constantly revised and enlarged. <https://www.loc.gov/aba/publications/FreeLCSH/SUBDIVISIONS.pdf>



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- <sup>53</sup> As stated in the following note, inserted under “Shakespeare” in the 8th Edition of LCSH (1975) and present until the 21st edition (1998): *The subdivisions provided under this heading represent for the greater part standard subdivisions useable under all literary author headings and may not necessarily pertain to Shakespeare*. Although the note no longer appears (as of 1999), the practice is presumably still in effect.
- <sup>54</sup> This is also the case with the LC class numbers: the Bacon theory still dominates the class numbers PR2941-PR2946, while the Burton, Marlowe and Oxford theories must share PR2947. Given the extensive production of books over the past century concerning Edward de Vere, 17th earl of Oxford as the leading alternative authorial candidate, this marginal allocation of the available “space” demonstrates symbolically how skewed and out-of-date the LC classification is when compared to the state of the debate and recent scholarship.
- <sup>55</sup> See for example the 1621 mention “celeber poeta qui a quassatione et hasta nomen habet” (the famous poet who takes his name from “shaking” and “spear”), by the rhetoric teacher John Vicars. Fred Shurink, “An Unnoticed Early Reference to Shakespeare,” *Notes and Queries* (March 2006), 72-75.
- <sup>56</sup> Salman Haider, “Library - Catalog Standardization: Resource Description and Access.” *Britannica*. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/library/Catalog-standardization#ref336276>
- <sup>57</sup> “FAQ – LC/PCC practice for creating NARs for persons who use pseudonyms.” *Library of Congress*. <https://www.loc.gov/catdir/cps/pseud.pdf>.
- <sup>58</sup> There is one intriguing example of multiple creators all using one pseudonym that can be found on the ANSSWeb site (the website of the Anthropology and Sociology Section for the Association of Research Libraries) in the article, “Representation of Pseudonyms in the Library of Congress Authority File” that is particularly germane to this authorship discussion. (<https://acrl.ala.org/anss/index.php/publications/cataloging-qa/representation-of-pseudonyms-in-the-library-of-congress-name-authority-file-2016-april/>).
- <sup>59</sup> Hjørland 2004, 500.
- <sup>60</sup> “The creation and revision of subject headings is a continuous process. Approximately 4,000 new headings, including headings with subdivisions, are added to LCSH each year. Proposals

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for new headings and revisions to existing ones are submitted by catalogers at the Library of Congress and by participants in the Subject Authority Cooperative Program (SACO). More information on SACO may be found at <https://www.loc.gov/aba/pcc/>. Approved proposals become part of the online authority file of subject headings at the Library of Congress, from which various publications are created.” From “Introduction” *Library of Congress Subject Headings*. <https://www.loc.gov/aba/publications/FreeLCSH/LCSH43%20Main%20intro.pdf>

<sup>61</sup> For examples, see Donald G. Ostrowski, *Who Wrote That?: Authorship Controversies from Moses to Sholokhov*. (Northern Illinois University Press, 2020).