



# Creating Occult Identities & Subjects

Or, How New NACO & SACO Funnels Will Improve  
Access to Occult Resources

Guy Frost, Valdosta State University  
Margaret Breidenbaugh, Cincinnati State Technical  
and Community College

# Who We Are...

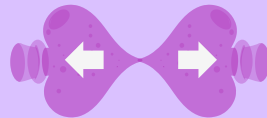


**Margaret Breidenbaugh (she/her)**, Resource Sharing Coordinator, Cincinnati State Technical and Community College

Co-founded SACO Gender and Sexuality Funnel in 2022

- Co-coordinators: Margaret, Maya Espersen, Adam Schiff

Secular Tarot Practitioner/Teacher and Literary Witch



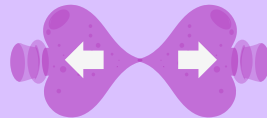
# \* Who We Are... \*

**Rebecca Saunders (she/her)**, Cataloging and Metadata Librarian, Western Carolina University

Volunteer with the Sylan Hearth Pagan Temple in Sylva, North Carolina since June 2023

- Book collection cataloger
- Materials circulation manager

Active and founding member of SACO Gender and Sexuality Funnel

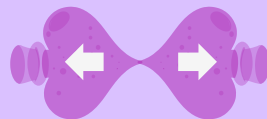


# Who We Are...

**Guy Frost**, Professor of Library Science and  
Catalog Librarian, Valdosta State University

Founded the New Age Movements, Occultism,  
and Spiritualism, Research Library (NAMOSRL)  
in 2016

- A Library with Archival Collections inside  
an Archive in a Library
- Currently at 52 Collections (Physical and  
Digital)
- ArchivesSpace; OCLC; YouTube; IR; Flickr



# What is NAMOSRL?



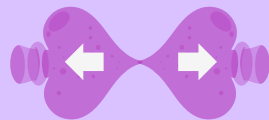
Founded in 2016, it is a project to collect and preserve the historical record of the religious movements emerging from the Counterculture

- Religious leaders from the time are now octogenarians (if they are still alive) and are looking for a home of their occult possessions
  - The collection includes anything that represents the creative output of the Movement's participants (individuals, coves, etc.)

Pinback by the Aquarian Anti-Defamation League circa 1973 (in MS/150/29)

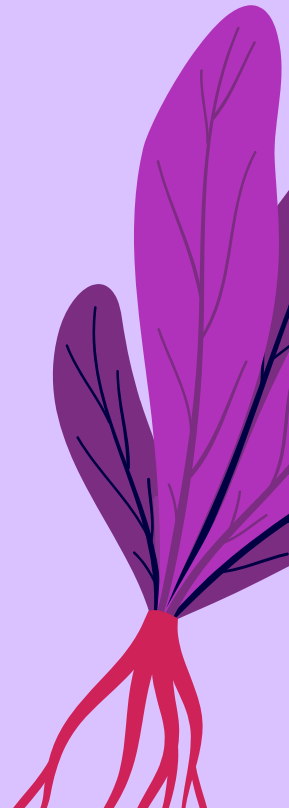
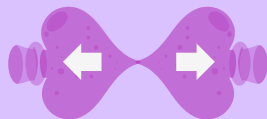
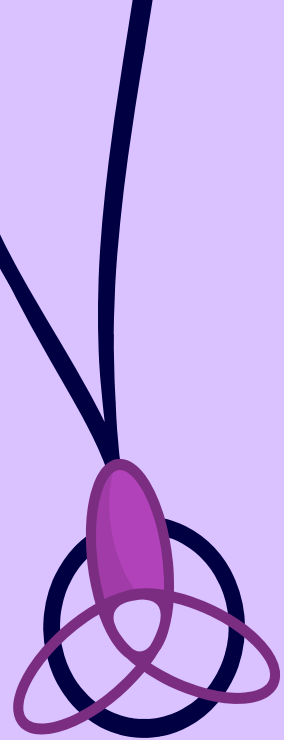
# The Need

Why did we form the Occult/Esoteric Funnel?



# The Call

"Occult headings have been largely ignored in the development of LCSH and other LC vocabularies. Some scholars have attributed this neglect to stigma associated with the occult and to a general lack of knowledge about these subjects. We are forming funnels that will guide the development and revision of legacy terms describing an ever-growing body of people and literature associated with Paganism, witchcraft, magick, esotericism, the paranormal, and other occult topics. Our conception of the occult is not limited by race, culture, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, disability, geographic location, faith, or secular/atheistic practice."



# Christian Bias in Current Headings

- **Limited Application:** Many headings useful to non-Christian religions are limited to just Christianity.
- **Missing Headings:** Many needed subject headings do not exist at all.
- **Confusing Headings:** Some subjects that do exist are confusing and need clarity with a scope note.



# Example: Church history

150 __	\$a Church history
360 __	\$i headings beginning with the word \$a Christian; \$i names of denominations, sects, churches, councils, etc.; and subdivision \$a Church history \$i under names of countries, cities, etc.
550 __	<b>\$w g</b> \$a History <i>[broader term]</i>
550 __	\$a Christianity <i>[related term]</i>
680 __	\$i Here are entered works on the institutional history of the church. Works on the Christian religion including its origin, beliefs, practices and influence treated collectively are entered under \$a Christianity.

<http://id.loc.gov/authorities/subjects/sh85025619>

*Narrower terms:* Christian sects;  
Classification--Books-Church history;  
Ecclesiastical geography; Protestantism;  
Sisterhoods

# Lack of Understanding About Occult Practices and People, and its History

- Some headings about occult/esoteric subjects are not current, accurate, complete, or respectful.
- Lack of knowledge of the "Movements" has caused subject headings to be misapplied or not created in the first place.

# For example...

## Old v. Modern Movement

witch v. Witch

witchcraft v. Witchcraft

wicce/a [pronounced witch-uh] v. Wicca

pagan v. Pagan

- ★ Beginning with Druids in the late 1700s, everything is "Neo" including them
  1. Labels applied by Protestants are erroneously associated with the new Movements
  2. Practitioners refer to themselves as Pagan, but they should be cataloged as Neopagan [Modern Pagan or Contemporary Pagan]
  3. Witch and Wicca still confused as synonymous

# Example: Espiritismo

150 __	\$a Spiritualism
360 __	\$i subdivision \$a Spiritualistic interpretations \$i under names of individual persons, e.g. \$a Jesus Christ--Spiritualistic interpretations; Shakespeare, William, 1564-1616--Spiritualistic interpretations
450 __	\$a Spiritism [ <i>variant term</i> ]
550 __	\$a Christianity [ <i>related term</i> ]

<http://id.loc.gov/authorities/subjects/sh2015000087>

*Inappropriate broader term: Spiritualism*

Possible Solution:

- Espiritismo (Cult)
  - Change proposal
  - Remove broader term Spiritualism
  - Removal of "(Cult)" from \$a was proposed on [Tentative Monthly List 2405](#)
  - Add scope note to disambiguate from Spiritualism
  - Add Established Heading Linking Entry (750) to support demonstrated usage
- Spiritualism
  - Change proposal
  - Add reciprocal scope note

## A NACO Example

### Lack of Knowledge of the Movements

- An example of a corrected authority record. Covens and other groups can join larger groups like CoG, but remain completely autonomous

410 2\_ |w nnea |a Covenant of the Goddess. |b Susan B. Anthony Coven No. 1

- Lack of knowledge of the purpose and aim of these larger groups and how associates are governed led to this error

# Prejudice and Persecution in Society

## Historical Examples

- Prosecution and torture of accused witches by Catholic Church in Early Modern Europe
- Salem (Massachusetts) Witch Trials (1692-1693)
- Forced religious conversion from non-Christian religions to Christianity: enslaved African people, indigenous people of the Americas, etc.; destruction of religious texts

## Happening Today

- Destruction of local religious beliefs by Christian missionary work
- 21st-century book bans (e.g., *Harry Potter*, *Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark*)

# Lack of Understanding or Prejudice?

What researchers suggest...

**Cecile Dubuis** master's thesis on occult libraries remarked there may be a "stigma associated with the occult."

**Johanson Kristiina and Tõnno Jonuks**, "Are We Afraid of Magic?" wrote in their article on magical artifacts at an Estonia museum that "unusual symbols on the backside of an artifact was not understood within Estonian culture and that the side with the signs "was deliberately hidden" from display as well as its utility being misclassified."

# Avoidance?

- Neopaganism - Establish in 1996
  - *Green Egg* began publishing in 1968; *Korythalia* by Feraferia in 1969
- Wicca - 2006
- Handfasting - 2019
  - LC had three books with Handfasting in the title when submitted (2003, 2004, 2008)

## Subjects still wanting

- Gardnerian (Wiccan sect)
- Alexandrian (Wiccan sect)
- Cochranianism (... sect)
- Thelema
- Chanting circles
- Too many to list



# Opinions and Assumptions

**Title:** *For the love of the moon: rituals for the full moon* / Lorelei Greenwood

**Subject heading assigned:** Moon worship - Correct? Incorrect?

- Was the cataloger assuming this was worshipping of the moon?
- Rites and ceremonies taking place during a full moon are *Esbats*
  - Nowhere on the publication does it say this
- Resources do not always describe themselves nicely for catalogers
  - Scope notes just might help

# Deliberate choosing the offensive term?

Subject heading: **Cults**

670s - only three of them

**670\_\_ |a** Chryssides, G. Historical dict. of **new religious movements**, 2001: |b p. ix (new religious movements; NRMs or cults)

**670\_\_ |a** Encyc. of rel. and soc., 1998 |b (**New religious movements**; NRMs, sometimes referred to as alternative religious movements, marginal religious movements, or cults)

**670\_\_ |a** Handbook of **new religious movements**, 2003: |b CIP galley (new religious movements; NRMs; new religions; cults)

- Why was **New Religious Movements** not the preferred term?

Google Retrieved Definitions of Cult

a relatively small group of people having religious beliefs or practices regarded by others as strange or **sinister**

a system of religious veneration and devotion directed toward a particular figure or object

- Has the Definition Changed and LCSH has not caught up?
- How small is small?
- Are headings like this implying something? **Cults--Brazil** - would **Candomblé** adherents be offended?

# Inconsistency of concepts across systems

- In LCC, its Christianity and New Religious Movement - not Cults

Christianity—Relation of Christianity to other religious and philosophical systems—Special, A-Z—Greek religions and philosophy. Hellenism

BR128.G8	Greek religions and philosophy. Hellenism <input type="checkbox"/>
	Cf. BT1140 Christian apologetics against Greek philosophers <input type="checkbox"/>
BR128.H5	Hinduism <input type="checkbox"/>
	Cf. BT1235.H5 Christian apologetics against Hinduism <input type="checkbox"/>
BR128.H8	Humanism, Religious <input type="checkbox"/>
BR128.I57	Insider movements <input type="checkbox"/>
	Islam see BP172-172.5 <input type="checkbox"/>
BR128.J35	Japanese religions <input type="checkbox"/>
	Judaism see BM535 <input type="checkbox"/>
BR128.K67	Korean religions <input type="checkbox"/>
BR128.M5	Mithraism <input type="checkbox"/>
BR128.N48	New Age movement <input type="checkbox"/>

# Source Material

- Emic (Insiders) vs. Etic (Outsiders)
  - Sources used to cite are written with an etic point of view (written by Protestants with a Protestant slant)
- Practitioners are secretive; few "reputable" sources at hand
  - "Oath Bound"
  - Outer Court v. Inner Court
  - Change in Philosophy

# Example of Etic Sources Used:

American Heritage Dictionary

Encarta World English Dictionary

Early genre submission: **Psychic readings**

Rejected because the only secondary source I used was Wikipedia

- Same term used in LCSH
- Item cataloged "is" a psychic reading (first 670)
- The phrase cannot be found in "standard" reference sources; not even a version of it

# LCSH Lacks Granularity

- Original proposal for **Ásatrú** was reworked by the Committee to be: **Icelandic heathenry** with Ásatrú as 450
- - problems with this:
  - Runestone [journal] ... ancient, yet ever new, religion known as Odinism or Asatru; official journal of the **Asatru Free Assembly**; what about other flavors of Heathenry? Will they become 450s too
- But... LCDGT - **Asatruars** ; and **Heathens (New religious movement)**

LCSH

**Heathenry (Germanic paganism)**

Broader Term: Norse **cults**

Broader Term: **Paganism** - should be **Neopaganism**

# Name Authorities

Many Occult Practitioners use Pseudonyms, or Craft Names

- Name chosen often reflects a deity the individual identifies with
  - More than one person may choose the same name (e.g., Epona, Oberon, Macha)
  - Some names are phrases: M. Macha NightMare
  - Some individuals have creative work under Craft name and Real Name (e.g., M. Macha NightMare is Aline O'Brien)
    - Unlike Macha who wants you to know they are the same person, others do not want to make that association

Not outing individuals is of prime importance. A dialog with these individuals or their publishers may be necessary

670;\_\_; \$a GVaS files

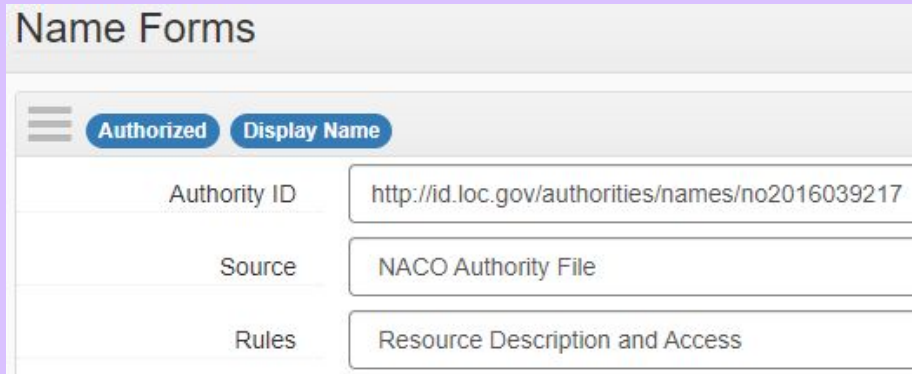
## **Name authorities needed**

- Of the 1,083 current Llewellyn Worldwide authors, 407 (about 38 percent) do not have an authority record
- Publishers tend to be Small/Independent Press with limited distribution
- A resurgence of print serials appears to be occurring (newspapers, newsletters, other magazines)
- Increase in occult publishers from Australia, Europe, South American, Canada, and the US



# Non-Book Materials

- Non-Library Catalog platforms, like **ArchivesSpace** are looking at Linked Data operability
  - "Nodes" are needed to support emerging initiatives



The screenshot shows a web interface titled "Name Forms". It features a navigation menu on the left and two tabs: "Authorized" (selected) and "Display Name". Below the tabs is a table with three rows:

Authority ID	<a href="http://id.loc.gov/authorities/names/no2016039217">http://id.loc.gov/authorities/names/no2016039217</a>
Source	NACO Authority File
Rules	Resource Description and Access

- Photographs contain more than the primary subject
  - *Pigtails (Hairdressing)* - rejected April 2024 because the Editorial Board failed to think outside a book format - or the wider bibliographic universe

**EMCO** (Entity Management COoperative of the PCC) and **WorldCat Entities** may offer non-NACO alternatives

- Both will allow the generation of URIs for entities

# The Process: Research

**1.**

Primary source materials

**2.**

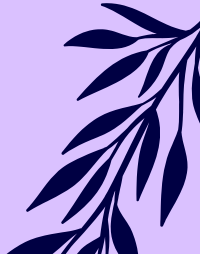
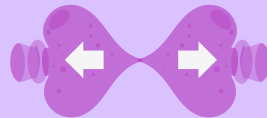
People Power /  
Empowered Creators

**3.**

Practitioner-authored  
publications (primary)

**4.**

Secondary source  
materials



# The Process: Consultation with Practitioners



Occult libraries and other knowledge organizations



Lost Traditions (the "Old Ways"), New or Combined Traditions (Modern or Contemporary Paganism)



Wiccans (Aquarian, Correllian, Feri, Gardnerian, Georgian, Lothloriën, etc.)



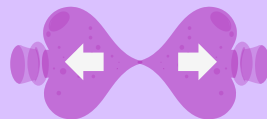
Solitary Practitioners, Members of Covens, Congregations, etc.



Psychics, Light Workers, Witches, Druids, Palmists, Cunning Folk, Yarb Doctors, Shamans



Atheists, Monotheists, Polytheists, Pantheists



# The Process: Comprehensive Approach

**1.**

Identify sources of terms

**2.**

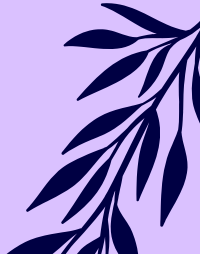
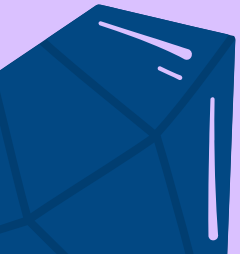
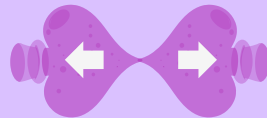
Collect terms

**3.**

Collocate and organize terms

**4.**

Identify gaps, inaccuracies, etc. in authorized vocabularies



# The Process: Literary Warrant

## Example: Correcting Attribution

**1.**

### Existing Term

Rider-Waite tarot  
<http://id.loc.gov/authorities/names/no2023091871>

**3.**

### Evidence (Warrant)

Katz, M., & Goodwin, T.  
(2015) *Secrets of the Waite-Smith tarot.*

**2.**

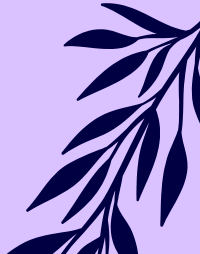
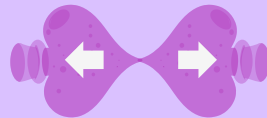
### Problem

Pamela Colman Smith is not attributed in the authorized term

**4.**

### Argument (NAR FAQ)

<https://www.loc.gov/aba/pcc/naco/personnamefaq.html>





# The Process: Communities of Practice & Submissions in Clusters

**1.**

Proactive approach: ongoing communities of practice based on areas of interest, e.g., Divination or Goddess Worship

**2.**

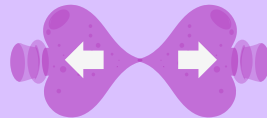
Collaboration and Belonging: Slack, Google Drive, Google Site; everyone who wants to is invited to contribute

**3.**

Cross-training: each community drafts proposals for SACO and NACO

**4.**

Proposals submitted thematically in clusters: LCSH, LCC, LCGFT, LCDGT, LCMPT, CYAC



# We need your help!

Join a Community of Practice,  
attend meetings, or just lurk:  
[occultfunnels@gmail.com](mailto:occultfunnels@gmail.com)

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# Thanks!

Guy Frost

[gfrost@valdosta.edu](mailto:gfrost@valdosta.edu)

Margaret Breidenbaugh

[margarchivist@gmail.com](mailto:margarchivist@gmail.com)

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