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Using WorldCat Identities

By Deborah J. Van Petten

Introduction

WorldCat Identities beta was released in 2007. Mining data from the authority records available in WorldCat, WorldCat Identities can be used to access an “identity web page” for authors, characters from books or films, ships, corporate entities, etc. Each entity can have a personal identity, a controlled personal identity, a corporate identity or a controlled corporate identity.

The personal and corporate controlled identities are people or things that come from a controlled vocabulary, for example, L'Amour, Louis 1908-1988, which I accessed February 18, 2013 at:

<http://www.worldcat.org/identities/lccn-n79-41797>.

WorldCat Identities may be accessed by clicking on the “Find more information about” box in a WorldCat catalog record of the author you are searching. You may also search WorldCat Identities at <http://www.worldcat.org/identities/>, which is how I have been accessing the authors I am researching.

Searching WorldCat Identities

Once you have entered a name, you will see a screen that may list multiple identities. For example, when entering the name Louis L'Amour, my dad's favorite author, twenty-three identities display. Using word cloud technology, the names displayed will have different size font. The more popular identities will be typed in a larger font and the less popular in a smaller font.

Of the twenty-three identities listed, sixteen display the personal identity icon. Two of the names display the term “Controlled Personal Identity.” Five of the identities have the subject term (Western stories) typed after the name, along with the dates of birth and death.

Clicking on the name with the largest text takes you to a page that may list the following information: Overview, Publication Timeline, Works About, Works By, Audience Level, Related Identities, Useful Links, and Fast Headings.

Overview provides information about: Works, Genres, Subject Headings, Roles, and Classification. Works will list the number of works in x number of publications in x languages and x library holdings. Genres list the genres associated with the author. Many times the listed genres are incomplete. Subject Headings lists the major subject heading(s) for the identity. Roles lists contributions associated with the person, such as lyricist, editor, compiler, correspondent, speaker, performer, interviewee, etc. Classification lists the Library of Congress Classification number and/or the Dewey Decimal number.

The Publication Timeline Chart provides a timeline of publications about the person and publications by the person published before and after their death. The Key provides the color associated with each of the above categories.

The “Works About” section will take you to the most widely held works about Louis L'Amour. If there are numerous works about the author you will see a dotted line with the word “More.” Click on it to have the other works displayed. The format of the publication (book, recording,

visual, etc.) will be listed after the author's name.

The "Works By" section takes you to the "Most widely held works" by Louis L'Amour. Click on the word "more" to see books that are available with the information of where they are available. Clicking on any of the titles in the "Works About" or the "Works by" will take you to the page for that title in WorldCat.

The "Audience Level" section provides a chart listing Kids on the left hand side, General in the middle of the chart, with Special on the right hand side of the chart. Kids is next to the number 0, with Special located near the number 1. Underneath the chart is the Audience level. For Louis L'Amour we have: Audience level: 0.35 (from 0.32 for Sackett's... to 0.39 for Education...).

The "Related Identities" section provides links to other Identity's associated with the author, such as fictitious characters, narrators, publishing companies, etc. Clicking the Sacket family (fictitious character) link takes you to the "Identity" web page for them.

The "Useful Links" section may list links to: the Library of Congress Authority File (English), the Virtual International Authority File, and/or the Wikipedia article for the author.

Clicking on the "Fast Headings" link at the top of the page takes you to the "Associated Subjects," which uses word cloud technology resulting in the subjects displaying in different text sizes.

To search another WorldCat Identity, click on the WorldCat Identities logo displayed in the upper left hand corner of the screen. You will then be back at the <http://www.worldcat.org/identities/>.

I have found one error in a WorldCat Identity page. Mary E. Jackson wrote *"The Spy of Osawatomie, or The mysterious companions of old John Briown "* in 1881. She wrote *"The life of Nellie C. Bailey, or A romance of the West"* in 1885. As her date of death of 1893 is not listed, books by authors with a similar name are displaying on her WorldCat Identities page at <http://worldcat.org/identities/lccn-n87-920142>. I am certain she has not written books on interlibrary loan, excel, and lowering the prices of prescriptions.

Uses of WorldCat Identities

Libraries and other groups use WorldCat Identities in various ways. The Bedford Public Library Web Resource (New Web Resource 2009) and other libraries have written about in it on their blogs. Iowa State University Library's Promotion and Tenure LibGuide (Pellack 2013) has a link to it.

The National Library of Australia⁴ uses WorldCat Identities "to connect people in the collection to their identity records and library holdings in WorldCat." Shipindex.org (Hickey 2009) has links to materials about ships in WorldCat, while the Southeast Kansas Symphony Orchestra (Composer Links 2013) web page has links to composers.

So far, I have used WorldCat Identities to identify books written by Donald Fixico for a patron recommending materials written by him, looked for books about authors that we do not have in our collection, and I am currently using it to research westerns written by women authors. I found it easy to use once I learned to click on the logo in the upper-left-hand corner to get back to the search screen.

Deborah J. Van Petten is Reference Librarian at Valdosta State University

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