ISNI in Action at Texas A&M University:
A Potential Solution Toward Name Disambiguation

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What is an ISNI?

- ISNI stands for "International Standard Name Identifier." It is an ISO-certified global standard for a repository of unique identifiers for persons (producers, performers, writers, etc.) and organizations
- One ISNI is assigned per public identity of a person or organization across all activities and roles played with regard to creative contents
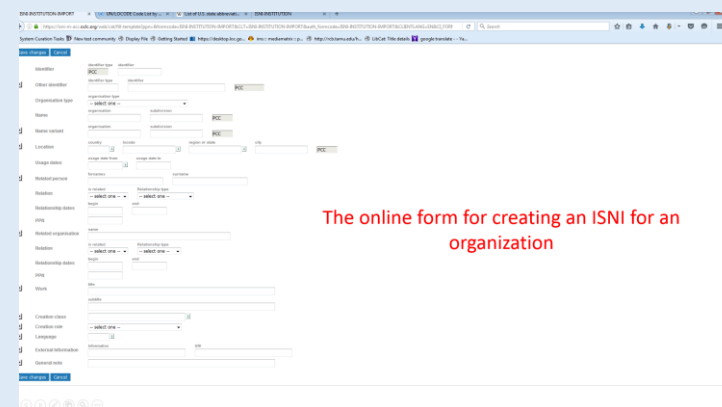
What is an ISNI used for?

- To serve as a "bridge" identifier across different communities (e.g., scientific communities, publishers, rights organizations, music and visual industry, museums, etc.)
- To serve as a PERSISTENT and UNIQUE identifier across domains, institutions and geographic areas
- To achieve interoperability by mapping with other standard (e.g., ORCID) or local identifiers
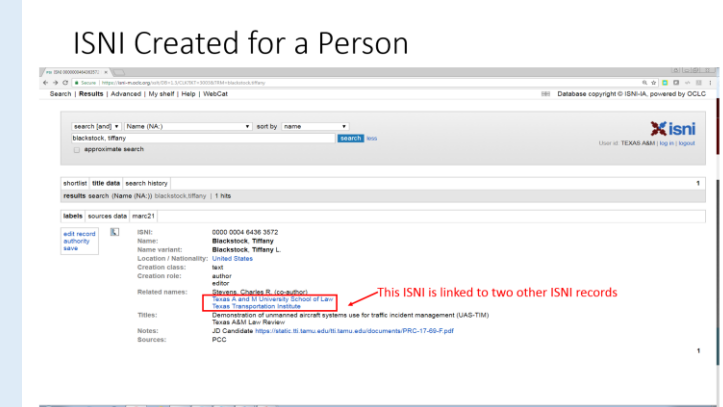
The PCC ISNI Pilot:

- A yearlong project (July 2017-July 2018) of the Program for Cooperative Cataloging where participants create and modify ISNI records in the ISNI database
- Its purpose is to learn about tools and workflows to help the PCC launch a long-range PCC membership involvement beyond the pilot
- This will help fulfill a strategic objective to get PCC members involved in managing identities in a global web environment alongside other communities

Why did Texas A&M Become Involved?

- Texas A&M Libraries has plans to explore persistent identifiers for managing the disambiguation and identification of names within our institutional repositories
- Identifiers (VIVO and ORCID) currently in use at Texas A&M are not as universal as we would like them to be.
    - ISNI may be able to help us develop a more diverse and robust approach to authority control within our digital asset management ecosystem
- As participants in PCC's NACO program, Texas A&M catalogers were interested in comparing the process of creating and managing records for ISNIs with authority records for names
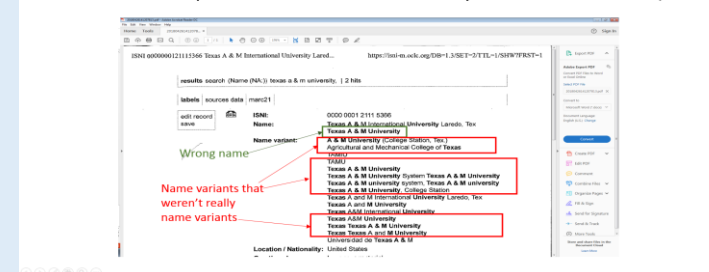

The online form for creating an ISNI for an organization

ISNI Created for a Person

This ISNI is linked to two other ISNI records

Identity of organizations within ISNI records is sometimes unclear

- Names of other institutions (e.g. Texas A&M University) sometimes appear in "name variant" category when they are NOT the same institution (Texas A&M International University at Laredo) in the main title display
- This causes confusion as to what entity the ISNI record is intended for and whether it is a duplicate of another ISNI
- Could be the result of erroneous mapping from other sources (such as VIAF) but there are also no rules or "best practices" about what is appropriate to enter for these fields
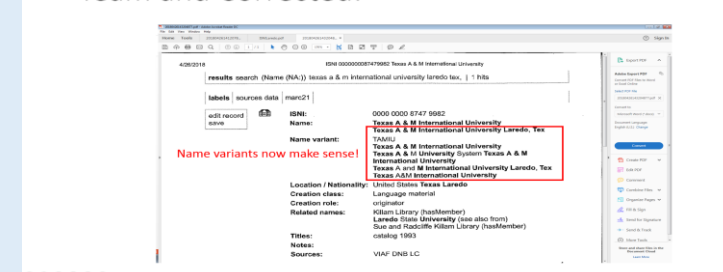

Record with Erroneous Name Variants: Before It Was Reported to ISNI Quality Control Team)

Wrong name

Name variants that weren't really name variants

Record After It Was Reported to ISNI Quality Team and Corrected:

Name variants now make sense!

Not always clear how to apply predetermined categories in the ISNI database to describe relationships people have had with organizations in their ISNI records ("is member of," etc.)

- What about: Institutions a person no longer works for? Agencies that published a person's works that he or she is not otherwise affiliated with?

How is ISNI work different from "traditional" authority work in the PCC NACO program?

- There is no "preferred name" in ISNI as with NACO. (All variant names are equivalent and form a "cluster" around a common ISNI number)
    - The identifier is the focus, not the text string
    - The ISNI identity is not represented by the uniqueness of the name
- No new record gets created when an organization changes names. New name is added to existing record as a variant
- Do not need to have forms of name "justified" by any source
- Can link your ISNI to related ISNIs (organizations or persons your entity is affiliated with) through Pica Production Number (PPNs)
    - The more ISNIs linked, the better for the broader community!

Conclusion: ISNI work can be simpler and quicker than creating name authorities for NACO but MANUAL SEARCHING and MAINTENANCE of ISNIs encountered is a lot more work due to duplicates, inconsistencies and "messiness" of data entered different ways by different sources, etc. Can refining the algorithms and batch editing help?

The Future of ISNIs at Texas A&M University:

We would like to:
- Explore ways to incorporate ISNIs, ORCIDs, etc. into our repositories to disambiguate names of faculty
    - Could we have a mechanism to alert catalogers when a faculty does not have an identifier so we can create one?
- Experiment with batch loading names to ISNI database
    - One of TAMU participants is on the Batch Processing Subgroup for the ISNI Pilot
- Contribute to documentation for ISNIs
    - One of TAMU participants is on the PCC Documentation & Training Task Force
    - Need for best practices (e.g., name variants vs. related names, describing relationships)