

Manner of Belonging: Interstitial Description of Samuel Johnson's Circle

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Abstract: This presentation will discuss a collaborative project between the Houghton Library (Harvard University) and the Beinecke Library (Yale University) to develop an ontology to describe relationships among entities (corporate bodies, persons, families) and between entities and resources, based on an existing set of EAC-CPF records for lexicographer Samuel Johnson and his circle.

The 78 rich records in that set were created by an earlier Houghton-Beinecke joint project that held as its goal to demonstrate the benefits of using EAC-CPF to describe creators of manuscript collections, and to encode meaningful semantic links among those creators, their associates, and the primary sources that document their lives and work.

The earlier project identified the need for a controlled vocabulary to express more nuanced relationships than can be expressed currently within EAC-CPF. In our presentation we will discuss the challenges of creating a controlled vocabulary that accurately expresses complex relationships common in 18th-century literary Britain, but that could also be extended to other time periods and non-literary relationships. The presentation will cover the tension between how granular the vocabulary should be and the costs/benefits of an extensive, detailed vocabulary versus a more limited, general (and easier to apply) vocabulary. We will also discuss the benefits of creating such an ontology for a Linked Data environment.

About the authors:

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