Dealing with Ancient Works in Bibliographies

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\LaTeX \ + \ \texttt{BibTeX}

or biblatex + biber

\ldots for bibliographies whose items are ‘recent’.
Ancient Works

Ἡσίοδος Ὁ ἔργα καὶ ἡμέραι. 8th century BC.

[Mersenne Marin?] Campanae Parisienses — Aria.

In Ancient Airs and Dances, by Ottorino Respighi.

With BibTeX

YEAR = {8th century \textsc{bc}}

OK! because all the fields are strings, all the sorts are lexicographic.

(BibTeX performs a concatenation of some fields: author(s), year, title.)
Another solution

\[ \text{YEAR} = \{-8xx\} \]

but negative numbers are not recognised as such.

Compare:

\[ \text{YEAR} = \{800\} \quad \text{YEAR} = \{1492\} \]

(Show.)
Surmised names

Better, with a command for a dummy accent:

\texttt{AUTHOR = \{Mersenne Marin\backslash unsure\}}

but works are \textit{interleaved}.
With biber

\[ \text{YEAR} = \{154?\} \quad \text{SORTYEAR} = \{1549\} \]

but all the sorts are lexicographic, too.
Advantage or drawback? A semantic analysis of values associated with fields is performed. Example: the YEAR field.

If a numerical sort is performed, all the concerned data were checked as numbers.
Why an option?

I think that the ‘classical’ use of a bibliography processor should be for ‘exact’ references.

Option -inexact.
New Syntax for -inexact option

‘ca’ for ‘circa’.

YEAR = {ca1492} \quad YEAR = \{ca-429\}

‘?’ for an unknown digit: 154?, 15??.

An unknown digit cannot be followed by an exact one.

(Show.)
Surmised and unknown authors

?? Mersenne Marin ← surmised
?? and Mersenne Marin ← unknown
Ordering years

An inexact year is ranked after the same exact year:

1492 < ca1492

A question mark is ranked after the digit year it can replace.

Inexact years are sorted according to the number of occurrences of the '?' sign:

1599 < ca1599 < 159? < 15??
Ordering names

An unknown author is ranked *before* any known one:

?? < Gianluca Pignalberi

An author with uncertain identity is ranked *after* the same ‘sure’ author:

Max Dominici < ?? Max Dominici
Now

New syntax recognised, internal forms (XML trees) updated.

Bibliography style hard-wired in Scheme (the \bibliographystyle command is useless).
Need of further experimentation

Available from November at:

http://disc.univ-fcomte.fr/home/~jmhufflen/texts/superreport/smlbibtex-1.3.tar.gz
Conclusion

From a point of view related to software engineering, I succeeded in updating this program written using Scheme.

What is the point of view of people involved in classical studies?