General FAQ for Australian libraries

What is RDA?
*RDA: Resource Description and Access* is the new descriptive cataloguing standard that will replace AACR2.

Why is RDA important?
RDA builds on the strengths of AACR2 but has some new features that make it more useful as a cataloguing code for the digital environment in which libraries now operate.

- RDA will cater better for digital resources and for resources with multiple characteristics, and will provide more guidance on the creation of authority headings.
- RDA will be compatible with a range of encoding schemas, such as MODS, Dublin Core, ONIX and MARC, which will allow library catalogue records to be integrated with those produced by other metadata communities.
- RDA will facilitate the clustering of bibliographic records for different editions, translations or formats of a work, and the more meaningful presentation of data to users.
- RDA will be a web-based product, which will enable cataloguers to view different levels of completeness of the code, move between related instructions using hyperlinks, and integrate their own institutional policies.

Who is responsible for the development of RDA?
Two international bodies are responsible for the development of RDA – the Joint Steering Committee for RDA (JSC) and the Committee of Principles (CoP).

The JSC is responsible for developing the new cataloguing rules and for consultation with stakeholder groups. Membership of the JSC is drawn from the American Library Association (ALA), the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP), the Australian Committee on Cataloguing (ACOC), the Canadian Committee on Cataloguing, the British Library, and the Library of Congress.

ACOC, which is a joint committee of the Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) and the National Library of Australia (NLA), represents the interests of Australian libraries on the JSC.

The JSC reports to the CoP, which is responsible for over-arching policy as well as budget and management issues. The CoP comprises representatives from the Canadian Library Association, ALA, CILIP, the Library of Congress, Library and Archives Canada, the British Library, and the NLA.

When will RDA be available?
The complete draft of RDA will be made freely available online during the last quarter of 2008 for libraries to review.

RDA will be published in mid-2009. Implementation by national libraries is expected in early 2010.

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What will RDA cost?
RDA will be an online, web-based product and a subscription model is currently being developed by the publishers. Pricing details will be released closer to the publication date.

What does my library need to do to implement RDA?
Records created using RDA are intended to integrate with AACR2 records in existing databases, but some global updating of headings will be required, such as changes to the structure of Bible uniform titles. In addition, changes to MARC21 will be made to accommodate new RDA data elements.

Libraries will need to consult with their library system vendor about their plans to accommodate such changes.

Each individual library will also need to decide when they will implement RDA and to devise their own implementation schedule. It is therefore important for library managers, system librarians and cataloguers to inform themselves about RDA.

Libraries will need to budget for the cost of RDA and plan the necessary training of their staff. They will also need to consider possible impacts on productivity during the implementation and “settling-in” period.

What is the National Library of Australia’s role?
The NLA has been closely involved in the development of RDA, with Deirdre Kiorgaard representing ACOC and chairing the JSC and with Pam Gatenby representing the NLA on the CoP.

The NLA will work with ALIA, ACOC, library schools, training agencies, system vendors, and other national libraries to ensure that the transition to RDA is smooth. To assist libraries with their own planning, the NLA is developing a strategy for communication with Australian and New Zealand libraries about RDA implementation.

Following the publication of RDA in 2009, the NLA will engage in systems testing and documentation development. The results of these activities will be shared with Australian libraries and other national libraries, in order to reduce the workload on any single library. This information, along with links to relevant articles and presentations, will be made available on the ACOC website hosted by the NLA.

Libraries Australia will work with subscriber libraries to develop new record import/export profiles and to co-ordinate global changes to data.

How do I get training?
A national training strategy will be developed by the NLA, in cooperation with ALIA, ACOC, library schools and training agents. Details about training courses provided by training agents throughout Australia will be made available on the ACOC website as they become available.

How do I keep informed?

An email discussion list hosted by the NLA will be launched to coincide with the release of the final RDA draft. The new email list will be widely publicised ahead of its launch.

Information about RDA development and additional FAQs are available on the JSC website. JSC’s URL is: [http://www.collectionscanada.ca/jsc/rda.html](http://www.collectionscanada.ca/jsc/rda.html)