

# Setting a new standard

## Resource Description and Access

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### **Abstract**

Resource Description and Access (RDA) is a new standard for description and access, which will replace the Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules, or AACR in 2008. This paper provides an update on progress toward the publication of RDA.

The place of AACR & RDA in the world of library standards is discussed. The reasons why simply revising AACR2 is no longer an option are given, and some of the issues faced in developing RDA are discussed.

An outline of the structure and content of the new standard are given, and the process and timeframe for the development of RDA is described. An early indication is given of the issues for training and implementation and how they might affect you as a cataloguer, library administrator, system vendor or other stakeholder.

## ***Introduction***

AACR, or the Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules, was first published in 1967 in separate editions for Britain and North America. The 1967 edition had as its basis the Paris Principles developed at a conference in 1961. It took until 1978 for AACR2 to be published as a single edition, and soon after, the standard began to be adopted by Australian libraries - the National Library of Australia adopted AACR2 in 1981.

Today AACR2 is the most widely-used standard for descriptive cataloguing in the English-speaking world, and it has also been translated into 24 other languages.

## **Where does RDA fit?**

RDA, like AACR, will primarily be a content standard. It will focus on data elements to describe a resource's content and physical carrier. It will also cover the choice and formulation of access points and citations. For many years AACR data elements have been packaged into MARC records to enable record sharing. However, RDA will remain independent of any communication format, and so it can be used with other encoding standards.

RDA won't cover subject description or classification, or how to create identifiers. As with AACR, those elements will continue to be covered by other content standards. RDA will also be built on the FRBR and FRAR conceptual models.

The major new content to be added to RDA is on reflecting bibliographic relationships, and on authority control.

## **International Conference on the Principles & Future Development of AACR (1997)**

AACR has been revised and maintained as a standard over many years. But by 1997 it was proving difficult to revise AACR2 to keep up with changes in the information world, and it was clear that there were some inherent problems in the code. At the International Conference on the Principles & Future Development of AACR<sup>i</sup> held in Toronto in 1997, experts were invited to share in developing an action plan for the future of AACR. Issues discussed at that meeting included Content vs. Carrier, and What is a work?<sup>ii</sup>

From the recommendations of that meeting, a program of work was implemented, and in 2002 a new Strategic Plan was developed which built on AACR2's existing strengths. This plan took AACR2 through a range of revisions until around 2003-2004. Important changes, for example in the treatment of seriality, were implemented over this time.

## ***Towards RDA***

However, it was realised that all the changes that were needed couldn't be made within the existing structure of AACR. Planning then began for what was known as AACR3. The full first draft of AACR3 Part I on Description was made available for comment in December of 2004. Reaction to that draft included some resistance to change, but also considerable support for even greater change.

## Resource Description and Access

This led to a re-think and a change of direction. Now the aim is to make a more radical change to the content, structure and style of the standard. Until this point AACR2 had been being revised simultaneously with the preparation of drafts of AACR3. To allow effort to be concentrated on the new standard, from 2005, revision of AACR2 ceased.

To signify this change of direction, a new title for the standard was agreed: *RDA: Resource Description and Access*. Resource Description and Access is a new standard for description and access designed for the digital world. A new Strategic Plan was also developed<sup>iii</sup>.

Three things are meant by “digital world”. Firstly, that the standard would provide instructions for the description of all types of resources, including digital and online. Secondly, that the descriptions themselves will be used in the digital environment, in web-based catalogues and resource discovery services. Thirdly, that the standard itself will be a Web-based tool, rather than a print tool as it is now.

RDA will also be developed with an awareness of issues such as the cost of creating resource descriptions. RDA will address this through allowing for the use of pre-existing metadata, and simplifying the metadata needed, particularly for online resources. The instructions will also be simpler both to learn and to apply.

At the opposite end of the spectrum, there are also new sources of metadata such as publisher's metadata, tables of contents, reviews etc., that can be used to enrich the metadata provided by cataloguers, and they need to be taken into account. Ways of value-adding to resource descriptions through improving collocation using FRBR will also be incorporated.

## Concepts underlying RDA

The concepts influencing how RDA is being developed have come from a variety of sources.

In recent years two conceptual models have been developed by IFLA (International Federation of Library Associations) Working Groups. The first of these is the Functional Requirements of Bibliographic Records, or FRBR<sup>iv</sup>. FRBR relates the data recorded in bibliographic records to the needs of the users of those records. RDA will support the FRBR user tasks of find, identify, select, and obtain.

FRBR also defined the bibliographic entities of work, expression, manifestation and item, and these concepts will be reflected in RDA. RDA aims to improve the ability to represent bibliographic relationships, such as between an author and the book they wrote, or between one version of Hamlet and another. By providing for the identification and collocation of works, expressions, and manifestations, the data that is produced using RDA could be used, for example, to organise large results sets in Libraries Australia. This in turn should assist catalogue users in navigating to the information they want.

Similarly FRAR (Functional Requirements of Authority Records) will influence the development of a new section to be added to RDA on controlled access points or authority data.

Another significant development has been IFLA's 'Statement of International Cataloguing Principles'. It is being drafted during successive international meetings, the fourth of which was held in August in Seoul, Korea. It is hoped by many that this document might be the first step in creating an International Cataloguing Code<sup>v</sup>.

There have also been some other specific new or revised standards for particular types of material, such as Cataloguing Cultural Objects and new or revised archival standards that are also influencing how RDA is being developed<sup>vi</sup>.

## RDA and other standards

In developing RDA there are a range of issues to be confronted. One group of issues relate to RDA's relationship with other standards.

### ISBD

ISBD is the International Standard for Bibliographic Description, and it was used as the basis for the development of AACR. One major difference between RDA and AACR is that RDA will not be structured by the eight ISBD areas of description, and it will no longer specify the use of ISBD punctuation. In RDA, the guidelines for recording data elements will be independent of the guidelines for data display. These changes have allowed the freedom to move beyond the ISBD areas, that is, to change the order of elements, redefine elements, add new elements, etc.

### Material designations

Another key change will be the treatment of Material Designations, GMDs and SMDs. These are the categories of content or carrier such as 'photograph' or 'music'. Although discussions are not yet complete, it is likely that RDA will have elements for Media category, Type of carrier and Type and form of content. These elements have been developed from work done by a GMD/SMD Working Group, and further developed in consultation with the publisher standard ONIX<sup>vii</sup>. If framework can be agreed, it will facilitate the exchange of data between these two communities. The IFLA group which maintains the ISBDs is also working on this issue through the Material Designations Study Group.

### MARC

The MARC standard is a key standard in the library world. We expect that most *RDA* data elements can be incorporated into the existing MARC 21 structure, and we are working with the MARC community on this. ACOC and the Canadian Committee on Cataloguing are taking the lead on this. Areas where MARC may need to change to incorporate new RDA elements will be identified, as well as additional elements that might be added to RDA.

## Issues in developing RDA

### Compatibility

As RDA is being developed, compatibility between existing records and records created under RDA is a major constraint. It will be a major issue for acceptance and implementation if libraries need to convert AACR2 records into RDA records. A simple example of how this acts as a constraint is with Latin abbreviations used in headings – ideally the international

standards for representing dates in headings should be used, but to do so would make headings created under AACR and RDA different. Although there won't be a need to convert AACR2 records into RDA records, if libraries do want to make full use of the RDA's enhanced capacity for representing the different FRBR levels, and for showing relationships, they may choose to make changes to existing records to make this possible.

### **Transcription**

Another issue is the role of transcription which was so important in AACR. In RDA the cataloguer will be able to "take what you see" on the resource without altering it. This will allow automated data capture and the re-use of metadata from other sources, issues very important to library managers in achieving cost-efficiencies. The issue is how to do this without making record matching and duplicate detection more complicated, and without losing the value-add provided by some of the existing instructions which standardise the data recorded.

### **Use by other communities**

The use of the code by other resource description communities, and by non-English speaking countries, is also a key issue. RDA is being developed for use in English language communities, but other countries will continue to translate it and adjust its instructions for their language and script. A number of other countries, in particular Germany and France, are looking closely at whether RDA might be able to replace their national cataloguing codes, so anything that can be done to internationalise the code will have great benefits. By making RDA simpler, and covering a wider range of resources, it might also be possible to meet a broader range of resource description needs, and perhaps RDA might be used outside of the library sector.

### **Persistent Identifiers and URLs**

One issue of particular importance in ensuring RDA is up to date is the incorporation of Persistent Identifiers and URLs. This is one area where the Australian Committee on Cataloguing (ACOC) has taken the lead. There has been general agreement on the direction proposed, and it looks like persistent identifiers and URLs will be incorporated into RDA.

## ***Outline of RDA***

### ***AACR structure***

General Introduction  
Part I: Description  
Part II: Headings, Uniform titles & References  
Appendices  
Index

### ***RDA structure***

General Introduction  
Part A: Resource Description  
Part B: Access Point Control  
Appendices  
Glossary  
Index

RDA will be in two parts. As well as a general introduction, each part will also have a new introduction which will include background information and clear statements of the principles

behind the rules, plus links to related standards and guidelines. Both parts I and II of AACR will now be included in part A of RDA. In very broad terms, part A will cover elements that libraries have traditionally recorded in bibliographic records, and part B will cover those traditionally recorded in authority records.

The overall aim is to provide clear general instructions, written in plain English. Examples throughout the standard will also be updated and improved. There are two working groups revising and replacing examples while the text of RDA is being prepared. Another change is that all the information about a data element will be grouped together, for example, the section on "title" will include both how to record the title and how to record notes relating to the title, grouped together.

This outline and the description which follows is up to date, but further changes are sure to occur as RDA is developed.

## Part A: Resource Description

Introduction to part A

1. General guidelines on resource description
2. Identification of the resource (Identify)
3. Technical (or carrier) description (Select)
4. Content description (Select)
5. Acquisition and access information (Obtain)
6. Related resources
7. Persons, families, and corporate bodies associated with a resource

Part A will begin with an introduction and general guidelines on resource description and describing relationships.

The following five chapters will relate purely to resource description, and are based on which of the FRBR user tasks they relate most closely to. A major change with this type of organisation is that, because the cataloguer isn't using a chapter built around a particular type of resource, they are able to describe whatever aspects are relevant. This will be especially useful for digital resources which often cut cross the categories in AACR, for example a webpage may be an integrating resource and also contain sound and pictures. These chapters were issued in draft in December 2005, and comments received on this draft are still being assessed.

Chapters 6 & 7 are about bibliographic relationships. The first draft of these chapters was released in August this year, and they are yet to be discussed.

## Part B: Access point control

Introduction to part B

8. General guidelines on access point control
9. Access points for persons
10. Access points for families
11. Access points for corporate bodies

12. Access points for places
13. Access points for works, etc.
14. Other information used in access point control

Part B will cover access point control, or authority control. Access point control is one of the key value-adds that using catalogue data provides over free text searching, and it is vital in giving the user precision in searching. The instructions will cover the construction of controlled access points for persons, corporate bodies and families, plus citations for works and expressions. These sections will be derived in part from part II of AACR.

However there will also be entirely new material on authority control. Part B will be guided by the new "FRAR" model (Functional Requirements for Authority Records). A preliminary draft of part B is currently being prepared.

## Appendices

- Appendix A. Capitalization
- Appendix B. Abbreviations
- Appendix C. Initial articles
- Appendix D. Presentation of data
- Appendix E. Presentation of access point control data
- Glossary
- Index

Each of the current appendices will be revised; some information will be moved into the main text, other information dropped if it is unnecessarily complex or does not require standardisation to meet user needs. There is a working group looking at appendices A-C.

In addition to the current appendices there will be appendix (or two) on data presentation. This is where information can be found on how to present RDA elements in an ISBD display or MARC record format.

The Glossary is also being thoroughly revised, and definitions will be incorporated into the body of the text the first time a new concept is introduced. In the web product, hyperlinks to these definitions will be provided.

## *How is RDA being developed?*

### **Who is developing RDA?**

The Joint Steering Committee for the Revision of the Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules, or JSC for short, is responsible for the content of the standard. JSC has six representatives drawn from the library associations, cataloguing committees and national libraries of the nations represented, i.e. Australia, Canada, the UK and the US. These groups are known as

'the constituencies'. The JSC also sometimes commissions working groups to look at specific issues in greater depth.

During the development of RDA there is an Editor, Tom Delsey and a Project Manager, Marjorie Bloss. Australian representation is through the Australian Committee on Cataloguing (ACOC).

The role of the constituencies, such as ACOC, is different now that we are working on a new standard, rather than revising an existing one. Previously constituencies would put forward rule revision proposals, which were responded to, decisions made by JSC and rule revisions issued. The greater part of JSC work now reverses this, in that drafts of RDA come from the editorial team and go out from JSC to the constituencies for comments and information gathering.

## Outreach

Throughout the process of developing RDA, input has been sought beyond the committee and indeed beyond the cataloguing community. In addition to cataloguers and library managers, there are also many other groups who are potentially affected by the changes in RDA: library administrators; library educators; system vendors; other resource description communities; national and international programs; IFLA and other rule-making bodies.

JSC has pre-existing mechanisms to consult with some of these stakeholders (such as the IFLA bodies, and DCMI) but not for some of the other communities. An Outreach Group has been specifically charged with developing relationships with these other stakeholders.

ACOC too is looking at ways to reach out to our stakeholders. In August 2005 ACOC formed a Focus Group to assist ACOC's three ALIA representatives (Ebe Kartus, Ann Huthwaite and Philip Hider) and its three National Library of Australia representatives (Deirdre Kiorgaard, Julie Whiting and Rob Walls) to present the Australian point of view on RDA. Australian librarians can have input to this process through any of the members of ACOC. Contact details for the members of ACOC can be found on the ACOC website <http://www.nla.gov.au/lis/stndrds/grps/acoc/acoc.html>.

## Timeline for RDA

June 2006: Issue draft of 2nd part of Part A

Dec. 2006: Issue draft of Part B

June 2007: Issue General Introduction, Appendices, and Glossary

Dec. 2007: Finalise all text

2008: Publish RDA

2008: Implementation?

The aim is to release RDA in 2008.

In recent years JSC has met twice yearly usually in April and October, and the timing of completed drafts reflects this meeting schedule. After each draft is issued there is a period of constituency review, and discussion at the next JSC meeting.

The process of review and re-drafting of successive parts will continue until late 2007/early 2008 when JSC will be ready to send the final text to the publishers. If that deadline is met, then RDA will be available by in 2008. If all goes well, the publication of RDA will coincide with the finalisation of IFLA's 'Statement of International Cataloguing Principles'.

### ***Implementation and training***

As time progresses, assisting libraries with preparing for implementation has become an issue. Planning for training and changes to documentation, as well as policy development both for individual libraries and for shared library databases will be needed.

When RDA is implemented, cataloguers will need some new training to familiarise themselves with the new standard. However, in future training will be easier because the instructions will be simpler, streamlined, and modernised. Local documentation will need to be examined, and if still needed, rewritten. However, the resulting documentation should be simpler, and easier to maintain. The ability to annotate RDA with local policies etc., should also assist.

Four national libraries have already committed to the implementation of *RDA*, including the National Library of Australia. The National Library of Australia may not use RDA at all times or for all resources, but it will remain the main content standard used for the description of resources.

The national library members on JSC will work together on implementation plans for our institutions. We will also provide information to assist the major shared databases such as Libraries Australia to make appropriate plans.

## **Conclusion**

Between now and 2008 there is a lot of work to be done to create RDA, Resource Description and Access. The ideas and participation of Australian librarians is a vital part of the process of making RDA a new standard for description and access designed for the digital world.

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<sup>i</sup> The principles and future of AACR. Ottawa : Canadian Library Association; Chicago : American Library Association, 1998.

<sup>ii</sup> The issues were addressed through nine papers: AACR2 and catalogue production technology; Access points for works; Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules, second edition: their history and principles; Beyond MARC; Bibliographic relationships; Content versus carrier; Issues related to seriality; The logical structure of AACR2; What is a work?

<sup>iii</sup> <http://www.collectionscanada.ca/jsc/stratplan.html>

<sup>iv</sup> Functional requirements for bibliographic records : final report. Munchen, Germany : K.G. Saur, 1998. <http://www.ifla.org/VII/s13/frbr/frbr.htm>

<sup>v</sup> <http://www.ifla.org/VII/s13/index.htm>.

<sup>vi</sup> Rules for Archival Description (RAD). Canadian Committee on Archival Description (1999-2003); Describing archives : a content standard . Society of American Archivists, (2004); Cataloging Cultural Objects (2005).

<sup>vii</sup> ONIX is an international standard used by publishers to share product and supplier information on the Internet.