

# Society of Archivists Data Standards Group

## A Guide to Archival and Related Standards

*Standards applicable to archives; for the digital delivery of repository guides, finding-aids, and images of material from collections.*

### **Title**

*RDA: Resource Description and Access*

### **Name of Standards Developing Organisation**

[Joint Steering Committee for Development of RDA](#) (JSC).

### **Current version**

RDA: Resource Description and Access. Chicago: American Library Association; Ottawa: Canadian Library Association; London: Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP), 2010 - .In: [RDA Toolkit](#). RDA is also available in print<sup>1</sup>.

### **Replaces**

*Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (AACR2)

### **Abstract**

RDA provides general and comprehensive guidelines and instructions on formulating data to support user tasks for resource discovery. RDA has been developed to replace the successful Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. RDA implements IFLA's Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records (FRBR) and Functional Requirements for Authority Data (FRAD). The RDA Toolkit was released in June 2010. RDA is currently being evaluated and tested by the library community; major libraries are unlikely to be able to implement before 2012.

### **Description**

#### Purpose and scope

*RDA: Resource Description and Access* provides a set of guidelines and instructions on formulating data to support resource discovery. Among the goals for RDA were:

- the instructions should be easy to interpret and use;
- they should provide effective control for all types of media;
- use should be encouraged beyond the library community.

"A key element in the design of RDA is its alignment with the conceptual models for bibliographic and authority data developed by the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA). The FRBR<sup>2</sup> and FRAD<sup>3</sup> models provide RDA with an underlying framework that has the scope needed to support comprehensive coverage of all types of content and media, the flexibility and extensibility needed to accommodate newly emerging resource characteristics, and the adaptability needed for the data produced to function within a wide range of technological environments."

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“Other key standards used in developing RDA include the *International Standard Bibliographic Description (ISBD)*, the *MARC 21 Format for Bibliographic Data*, and the *MARC 21 Format for Authority Data*. ... Consideration has been given to the metadata standards used in other communities (archives, museums, publishers, semantic web, etc.) to attain an effective level of alignment between those standards and RDA.”

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### Structure

RDA is divided into ten sections: sections 1-4 cover elements corresponding to the entity attributes defined in FRBR and FRAD; sections 5-10 cover elements corresponding to the relationships defined in FRBR and FRAD. The initial chapter in each section sets out the functional objectives and principles underlying the guidelines and instructions in that section, and specifies core elements to support those functional objectives. Subsequent chapters within each section cover attributes or relationships that support a specific user task.

### Features

“RDA provides a flexible and extensible framework for the description of resources produced and disseminated using digital technologies while also serving the needs of agencies organizing resources produced in non-digital formats. RDA is designed to take advantage of the efficiencies and flexibility in data capture, storage, retrieval, and display made possible with new database technologies, but to be compatible as well with the legacy technologies still used in many resource discovery applications”

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RDA makes a clear distinction between the carrier of a resource, such as a volume, or a videodisc, and its intellectual content, for example, text, or, two-dimensional moving image. RDA also provides comprehensive instructions for recording attributes of persons, families and corporate bodies associated with resources. Future development is planned to extend the scope of RDA to include guidelines and instructions for description and access by subject. RDA defines vocabularies to describe relationships between entities.

Changes from AACR2 that may be of interest to the archival community include:

- provision of more elements for non-printed text resources
- provision of more elements for non-text resources
- provision of more elements for unpublished resources
- provision to treat families as creators or contributors

### Development

RDA is built on foundations established by the *Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules* (AACR) and the cataloguing traditions on which it was based. The resolution of problems identified by the *International Conference on the Principles & Future Development of AACR*, held in Toronto in 1997<sup>4</sup>, went beyond the scope of the normal process of revision and it was decided these could only be addressed by changes to the structure of AACR2. Work on a

new edition, provisionally entitled AACR3, began in 2004. Tom Delsey, author of the study of the logical structure of AACR2<sup>5</sup>, was appointed as Editor for the new edition.

Development was led by the Joint Steering Committee for Revision of AACR2. The first Draft of Part I of AACR3 was issued to constituencies for review in December of 2004. After evaluating feedback from the review of the draft of part I of AACR3, JSC decided on a change of direction and the decision was made to adopt the title: "RDA: Resource Description and Access". The development of RDA involved extensive consultation on change proposals and drafts, which was opened to other cataloguing communities, in addition to the constituencies represented on JSC.

### Implementation

RDA was published in June 2010. The transition from AACR2 to RDA has to negotiate the web of inter-dependencies which support existing bibliographic services. Institutions are evaluating and testing the impact of RDA on their own infrastructures and performance. An important milestone will be the outcomes of the US National Test, expected to be announced in June 2011. Major implementations of RDA are not expected to commence until early 2012.

### **Next month**

Next month we will look at Describing Archives: A Content Standard (DACS). This is a set of rules for describing archives, personal papers and manuscripts, and is the official archival descriptive standard of the Society of American Archivists (SAA).

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<sup>1</sup> For details of the printed product visit <http://www.rdatoolkit.org/rdaprint>

<sup>2</sup> IFLA Study Group on the Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records, *Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records: Final Report* (München: K.G. Saur, 1998), 82. Available online at: <http://archive.ifla.org/VII/s13/frbr/frbr.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> IFLA Working Group on Functional Requirements and Numbering of Authority Records (FRANAR), *Functional Requirements for Authority Data: A Conceptual Model*, edited by Glenn E. Patton (München: K.G. Saur, 2009).

<sup>4</sup> International Conference on the Principles & Future Development of AACR

<http://www.rda-jsc.org/intlconf1.html>. The proceeding were published as:

The principles and future of AACR : *proceedings of the International Conference on the Principles and Future Development of AACR* : Toronto, Ontario, Canada, October 23/25, 1997 / edited by Jean Weihs. — Ottawa : Canadian Library Association ; London : Library Association Publishing ; Chicago : American Library Association, 1998. — ISBN 0-88802-287-5 (ALA); 1-85604-303-7 (LA)

<sup>5</sup> Delsey, Tom. The logical structure of the Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules: <http://www.rda-jsc.org/docs.html#logical>