

**RDA: Boondoggle or Boon?
And What About MARC?**

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Rick Block On RDA:

"I think it is a disaster. I'm hoping it is never implemented."

Library Journal Nov. 15, 2008

Rick Block On MARC:

Unlike some of his colleagues, he believes the MARC record has a future. He points out the example that Columbia has invested a great deal in it, even in its electronic displays. "We have millions of records in MARC," says Block, "so I don't think it will go away."

Library Journal Nov. 15, 2008

Rick Block on ?:

“When I was in library school in the early '80s, the students weren't as interesting”

New York Times July 8, 2007
A Hipper Crowd of Shushers

Why me? My perspective

- I've been quoted
- I ignored it as long as I could
- I'm a teacher and a practitioner
- I'm struggling to understand RDA
- I've not lived through a code change
- Goal for today: present a balanced view of RDA as I understand it

RDA is ...

- “RDA is a **content standard**, not a display standard and not a metadata schema. RDA is a set of **guidelines** that indicates how to **describe** a resource, focusing on the pieces of information (or attributes) that a user is most likely to need to know. It also encourages the description of **relationships** between related resources and **between resources** and **persons** or **bodies** that contributed to creation of that resource.” (Oliver, 2007, *Changing to RDA*)

RDA ...

- A FRBR-based approach to structuring bibliographic data
- More explicitly machine-friendly linkages (preferably with URIs)
- More emphasis on relationships and roles
- Less reliance on cataloger-created notes and text strings (particularly for identification)

Why Not AACR3?

- Reviewers of AACR3 Part I (2004-05) identified areas for improvement:
 - Proposed structure of rules – too awkward
 - More metadata-friendly; less library jargon
 - More connection to FRBR
 - Modify the connection of the rules to ISBD
 - Changes need to be significant enough to merit a new cataloging code, but records still need to be compatible with AACR2

What RDA is *intended* to be

- A content standard
- A set of guidelines
- Focused on user tasks (Find, Identify, Select, Obtain mantra throughout)
- An online product (with possible print “derivatives”)
- A more international standard
- An effort to make library catalog data play better in the Web environment
- May be used with many encoding schema such as MODS, MARC, Dublin Core
- An attempt to improve the way we describe and present relationships among resources and bibliographic entities
- Flexible and adaptable

Goals of RDA

- Provide consistent, flexible, and extensible framework for description of all types of resources and all types of content
- Be compatible with internationally established principles, models and standards
- Be usable primarily within the library community, but be capable of adaptation for other communities (e.g. archives and museums)
- Be compatible with descriptions and access points devised using AACR2 in existing catalogs and databases

What it is *NOT* intended to be

- A display or presentation standard
- A metadata schema
- A rigid set of rules
- Structured around ISBD areas and elements
- Instructions on creating and formatting subject headings (yet)
- Instructions on classification numbers

Goals of RDA

- Written in plain English, and able to be used in other language communities
- Be independent of the format, medium, or system used to store or communicate this data
- Be readily adaptable to newly-emerging database structures

Foundations and Influences

- FRBR (Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records)
- FRAD (Functional Requirements for Authority Data)
- AACR2
- Paris Principles ("Statement of International Cataloguing Principles" 2009 version)
- ISBD (International Standard Bibliographic Description) But RDA does not follow ISBD order and ISBD punctuation is no longer required.

Stakeholders

- Joint Steering Committee for Development of Resource Description and Access
- American Library Association (ALA)
- Association for Library Collections and Technical Services (ALCTS)
- Cataloging and Classification Section
- RDA Implementation Task Force
- Australian Committee on Cataloguing (ACOC)
- The British Library
- Canadian Committee on Cataloguing (CCC)
- CILIP: Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals
- The Library of Congress
- International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA)
- Dublin Core Metadata Initiative (DCMI)
- RDA/MARC Working Group

Stakeholders

- Catalogers – and –
- Library administrators
- Cataloging educators
- Public service librarians
- Systems developers
- Metadata communities
- MARC format developers
- National and international programs (PCC, ISSN, etc.)
- **You**
-to name a few.....

Well, only if the rules actually achieve these lofty, if laudable, goals

2.1.1.1

If the resource does not contain any of the sources listed above, use as the preferred source of information another source within the resource itself, giving preference to formally presented sources

Well, only if the rules actually achieve these lofty, if laudable, goals

Construct the preferred access point representing a libretto or song text, by adding Libretto to the preferred access point representing the work or part(s) of the work if the work or part(s) contain only the text of an opera, operetta, oratorio, or the like, or Text to the preferred access point representing the text of a song. For compilations by a single composer, add Librettos if the compilation contains only texts of operas, operettas, oratorios, or the like; otherwise add Texts.

Structure of RDA

- RDA contains:
 - 10 sections
 - with 37 chapters
 - and 13 appendices
- Table of Contents is 113 pages

Structure of RDA	
0	Introduction (purpose and scope, foundations, objectives, principles, structure, core elements, etc.)
Section	Attributes
1 Chapters 1-4	Manifestation and item (e.g., title, statement of responsibility, edition statement, publication information, etc.)
2 Chapters 5-7	Work and expression (e.g., title of the work, content type, etc.)
3 Chapters 8-11	Person, family and corporate body (e.g., name, identifier, associated dates, etc.)
4 Chapters 12-16	Concept, object, event, and place

Structure of RDA	
Section	Relationships
5 Chapter 17	Primary relationships between work, expression, manifestation, and item (hierarchical)
6 Chapters 18-22	Relationships to persons, families, and corporate bodies associated with a resource
7 Chapter 23	Subject relationships
8 Chapters 24-28	Relationships between works, expressions, manifestations, and items (successive, derivative, etc.)
9 Chapters 29-32	Relationships between persons, families, and corporate bodies
10 Chapters 33-37	Relationships between concepts, objects, events, and places (such as broader or narrower terms)

New Terminology	
Current term	RDA Term
Heading	Access point
Authorized heading	Preferred access point
See references	Variant access point
Authority control	Access point control
Uniform title	Preferred title
Chief source	Preferred source of information
No real equivalent—some possible parallels in MARC relator codes and relator terms	Relationship designator (indicates the nature of a relationship/role, e.g. author, arranger of music; abridgement of [work], contained in [work]; alternate identity, family member, employee)

RDA Appendices

- Capitalization
- Abbreviations
- Initial articles
- Record syntaxes for descriptive data
- Record syntaxes for access point control data
- Additional instructions on names of persons
- Titles of nobility, terms of rank, etc.
- Dates in the Christian calendar
- Relationship designators (4 appendices)
- Complete examples

Reaction to RDA drafts

- Rhetoric is at times heated
- Mostly taking place on email lists and the blogosphere, rather than in the published literature
- Falls into two camps:
 - Too extreme
 - Not extreme enough
- Both sides have some valid points; both miss the point entirely at times

Jenn Riley. "RDA and FRBR: An Update."
<http://www.dlib.indiana.edu/~jenrile/presentations/ijl2007/rdafrbr.pdf>

Reaction to RDA drafts

- The JSC claims RDA will make shifts in the theoretical framework without invalidating previous cataloging work
- So, we must both change the standard and not change the standard
- This is why JSC's work has been criticized for being both too dramatic a change, and not a sufficient change

The “too extreme” argument goes something like:

- Abandonment of ISBD as a guiding structure is a step backwards
- FRBR is just theory, we shouldn't be basing a cataloging code on it
- Language is incomprehensible
- Planned changes don't give enough benefit to warrant the costs of implementation

Adapted from Jenn Riley. "RDA and FRBR: An Update."

“Too Extreme”

- No other communities are going to use this thing anyways
- Any simplification of rules might reduce record quality and granularity
- Trying to cater to multiple audiences pollutes a library cataloging standard.
- Retraining staff will be expensive for libraries and confusing to catalogers – the bigger the change, the more the cost and confusion.

“Too Extreme”

- See Gorman paper for an example

“The RDA seeks to find a third way between standard cataloguing (abandoning a slew of international agreements and understandings) on the one hand and the metadata crowd and boogie-woogie Google boys on the other.”

The “not extreme enough” argument goes something like:

- Too much data relegated to textual description
- Length and specificity make it unlikely to be applied outside of libraries
- Plans to remain backwards-compatible prohibit needed fundamental changes
- FRBR integration only a surface attempt
- RDA is a “legacy standard” mired in past thinking. It will never catch on outside of libraries if it remains so complicated (example: 2 chapters = 120 pages of info.).

Adapted from Jenn Riley. “RDA and FRBR: An Update.”

“Not Extreme Enough”

- RDA is too bottom heavy. JSC should create broad rules for most scenarios and let specialized groups produce details.
- JSC cannot create a robust standard for both digital and analog records. It must choose digital or risk losing forward thinking supporters.
- A less structured approach would allow for more sophisticated computer mediation, which would create superior search results and better serve patron demands.

“Not Extreme Enough”

- See Coyle/Hillmann paper for an example

“Particularly problematic is the insistence that notions of “primary” and “secondary,” designed to use effectively the space on a 3 x 5 inch card, must still be a part of RDA. Preferences about identification of materials continue to focus on transcription in concert with rules for creating textual “uniform” titles by which related resources can be gathered together for display to users. Similarly, relationships between works or derivations have been expressed using textual citation-like forms in notes.”

Working Group on the Future of Bibliographic Control

- Develop a More Flexible, Extensible Metadata Carrier
- Integrate Library Standards into Web Environment
- Extend Use of Standard Identifiers
- Develop a Coherent Framework for the Greater Bibliographic Apparatus
- Improve the Standards Development Process, including return on investment and greater focus on lessons from user studies
- *Suspend Work on RDA*

WG Recommendation 4.2

- Presented their preliminary recommendations Nov. 13, 2007 at the Library of Congress, recommendation 4.2 directed at RDA. The working group expressed their concerns about the new guidelines:
 - RDA is being written on a framework that is not yet tested-- FRBR concepts need to be tested on real cataloging data
 - "Temporarily suspend all further new work on RDA"
 - need thorough exploration of FRBR and implications on bibliographic control
 - WG needs assurance that RDA is based on practical reality as well as on theoretical construct, that this would improve the support for the new code
 - need more info on cost of implementation
 - need identification of the real benefits of implementation
 - need info on hospitality of systems to be able to handle the new rules
 - urge the JSC to go back and address these outstanding issues, as well as language issues, organization, and usability

Draft Review Process: Positive Features of RDA

- Re-organization of the instructions around a clearly-defined element set
- Effort to support both current and forward-looking implementation scenarios
- Application of the FRBR/FRAD data models, including the attributes, relationships, and user tasks
- Emphasis on relationships among resources and entities
- Greater emphasis on describing entities, as opposed to creating access points

Draft Review Process: Positive Features of RDA

- Consistent specification of resource identifiers as an alternative to text strings for identifying entities
- Effort to support international application of RDA outside of an English-language environment
- Decision to define a place for subject entities and relationships in the RDA structure
- Collaborations with the ONIX and DCMI communities have already yielded what may turn out to be some of the most significant products of the RDA project

Draft Review Process: Not So Positive Features of RDA

- Constituency review of the RDA draft was deeply flawed and a difficult and unpleasant experience.
 - Calls into question whatever credibility the RDA project has left
 - The PDF files in which the full draft was finally issued were flawed documents, characterized by abundant typographical errors, faulty references, and a layout that obscured rather than supported the content

Draft Review Process: Not So Positive Features of RDA

- Frustrating combination of a forward-looking structure with the retention of vast amounts of case law and arbitrary decisions from the past.
 - Instructions retain many of the arbitrary decisions inherited from AACR2, and the current reorganization now highlights how arbitrary many of those inherited decisions are.

Draft Review Process: Not So Positive Features of RDA

- Catalogers of special types of resources, such as cartographic, archival and moving-image resources, have become convinced that they have nothing to gain from RDA and much to lose
- RDA fails to meet many of its objectives, but none more fatally than the objective of **clarity**: RDA is **not** "clear and written in plain English."

Will RDA Ever be Implemented?

- Heidi Hoerman's presentation on RDA from the 2008 OLAC/MOUG/NOTSL Conference. She reviews RDA and predicts:
 - "RDA will die a quiet death."
 - "AACR2r2010 will be published."
 - "RDA's aims will be realized in due time."

Will RDA Ever be Implemented?

- Even if RDA proves to be as bad as detractors suggest, it may still have some important things to say about cataloging
- Perhaps if RDA proves to be insufficient, its shortcomings will be addressed and the next standard will be the dramatic change
- **Or**, maybe RDA will be just as dramatically wonderful as it has been suggested it will be

MARC

“The electronic embalming of the catalog card.”

--Michael Gorman

“MARC has always been an arcane standard. No other profession uses MARC or anything like it.”

--Roy Tennant

MARC: WoGroFuBiCo

- *3.1.1.1 LC: Recognizing that Z39.2/MARC are no longer fit for the purpose, work with the library and other interested communities to specify and implement a carrier for bibliographic information that is capable of representing the full range of data of interest to libraries, and of facilitating the exchange of such data both within the library community and with related communities.”*

What about MARC? How will RDA change this standard?

- RDA/MARC Working Group is to propose changes to MARC21 to accommodate encoding of RDA data
- MARC is only one possible encoding schema for RDA data
- RDA online product will include mappings to MARC (current PDF draft has mappings to MARC21 in Appendix D)
- “JSC has gradually backed away from their original stance that RDA could be expressed easily in MARC21”—Diane Hillmann
- Well supported rumors indicate that LC is considering discontinuing update of MARC21 sometime in 2010

What about MARC? How will RDA change this standard?

- We don't have complete answers about how MARC will change with the adoption of RDA.
- The RDA/MARC Working Group has formed to address these questions:
 - Under the auspices of the British Library, the Library and Archives Canada, and the Library of Congress, an RDA/MARC Working Group has been established to collaborate on the development of proposals for changes to the MARC 21 formats to accommodate the encoding of RDA data. With the implementation of RDA anticipated for late 2009, the Working Group will be drafting proposals for review and discussion by the MARC community in June 2008.
 - Although the MARC 21 formats support the encoding of descriptions created according to a wide range of content standards, the close relationship between AACR and MARC 21 has contributed to the efficient exchange of information among libraries for decades. The RDA/MARC Working Group will identify what changes are required to MARC 21 to support compatibility with RDA and ensure effective data exchange into the future.
- (Taken from an email posted by Marjorie Blossto RDA-L on April 13, 2008)

Future of MARC

- Discussion of the future of MARC is only partially about MARC
 - The broader digital information landscape
 - Technologies
 - Cataloging practices
 - The diminishing market share of:
 - Libraries in the information marketplace
 - Library catalogs as a resource discovery tool

MARC's Richness

- Metadata record with approximately 2,000 elements available
 - Approximately 200 fields
 - Approximately 1800 subfields or other structures
- To what extent is the richness/complexity exploited

MARC: My Thoughts

- Rumors of MARC's death have been greatly exaggerated.
- Nevertheless, the "cult of MARC" could keep us from seeing or moving ahead
- It's not *MARC* that's killing us, it's the *record*
- The pursuit of the perfect record must end

MARC: My Thoughts

- Librarians have had greatest success with data sharing
- Don't sweat over MARC
- Can re-package MARC data
- ILS systems need to gather and display records: not a lot needs to be done to MARC records
- Not convinced MARC will die either by murder or natural causes

RDA Online Product: Planned Features

- Browse and Search text (chapters and appendices)
- RDA-AACR2 Mappings
- Mappings to Dublin Core, ISBD, MARC
- Full or Core View options
- Workflows and examples for different formats and types of resources
- Links to external resources
- Customizable views and settings
- Demo from the IFLA Satellite Meeting, August 2008:
<http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/jsc/docs/iflasatellite-20080808-demo.pdf>

Testing

- Six months
- Coordinated by U.S. national libraries: LC, NAL, NLM
- Also includes PCC libraries of varying sizes, some archives, ILS vendors, OCLC
- RDA itself and compared to AACR2

Testing

- Feasibility of creating bibliographic data and populating MARC record
- Workflow and time comparison to AACR2
- Determination of possible changes to MARC to accommodate data created using RDA
- Financial impact of training, workflow, and workflow adjustments
- Usability: for catalogers, by systems, ability of users to locate desired information
- Co-existence of RDA and AACR2 records
- Integration between online product and other tools
- System development needed for implementation

Controversies, questions, considerations ...

- Cost and accessibility of online product
 - It is unlikely that RDA in its entirety will be available through open access.
- Too radical or not radical enough?
- Drafts have been difficult to understand and inconsistent
- Has FRBR been tested enough?
- FRBR model doesn't apply equally well to all types of materials
- WoGroFuBiCo's recommendation to suspend work on RDA

Controversies, questions, considerations ...

- Internationalization vs. Anglo-American membership on JSC
- Flexibility and adaptability vs. specificity and detail
- Break with the past vs. compatibility with legacy data
- Simplicity and ease of use vs. length and FRBR jargon
- Must MARC die?
- What is OCLC going to do?
- ... and others

Current Timeline

- Full draft released in PDF November 17, 2008
- Comment period on full draft ends February 2, 2009
- JSC compiles comments at March 2009 meeting
- RDA content finalized 2nd quarter 2009
- RDA release, 3rd quarter 2009
- Testing will be 6 months only after it is available
- Testing by national libraries, 3rd-4th quarters 2009
- Analysis and evaluation of testing by national libraries, 1st-2nd quarters 2010
- Implementation? 3rd-4th quarters 2010
