

Full Length Research

New Cataloguing Principles and Standards for Cataloguing of Information Resources: RDA Basics

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RDA is the new standard for descriptive cataloging providing data elements, instructions, and guidelines on recording the contents and formulating bibliographic metadata for description and access to information resources covering all types of content and media held in libraries and related cultural organizations, such as museums and archives. RDA is designed for the digital world. The metadata created by following RDA instructions are well formed according to international models for user-focused linked data applications that are compatible with existing records in online library catalogs and also adaptable to new and emerging database structures. RDA is the successor to Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules, second edition (AACR2), which is still the most widely used cataloging standard worldwide. Built on the foundations established by AACR2, the organization of RDA is based on international standards developed by the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA), such as Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records (FRBR) and Functional Requirements for Authority Data (FRAD).

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INTRODUCTION

RDA stands for "Resource Description and Access" and is the title of the standard, which is the successor to AACR2. RDA refers to Resource Description and Access, a new cataloging standard replacing AACR2. Resource Description and Access (RDA) is a standard for descriptive cataloging providing instructions and guidelines on formulating bibliographic data. Resource Description & Access (RDA) is a set of cataloging instructions based on FRBR and FRAD, for producing the description and name and title access points representing a resource. RDA offers libraries the potential to change significantly how bibliographic data is created and used. RDA is a standard for resource

description and access designed for the digital world. It provides:

- A flexible framework for describing all resources (analog and digital) that is extensible for new types of material,
- Data that is readily adaptable to new and emerging database structures,
- Data that is compatible with existing records in online library catalogs. RDA is a package of data elements, guidelines, and instructions for creating library and cultural heritage resource metadata that are well-formed according to international models for user-focused linked data applications.

RDA goes beyond earlier cataloging codes in that it provides guidelines on cataloging digital resources and places a stronger emphasis on helping users find, identify, select, and obtain the information they want. RDA also supports the clustering of bibliographic records in order to show relationships between works and their creators (Pictochart 2021).

Resource Description and Access (RDA)

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RDA is the successor to Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules, second edition (AACR2), which is still the most widely used cataloging standard worldwide. Built on the foundations established by AACR2, the organization of RDA is based on international standards developed by the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA), such as Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records (FRBR) and Functional Requirements for Authority Data (FRAD). The creation of RDA was the result of collaboration between representatives from the United States, Canada, Great Britain, Germany, and Australia. RDA was developed by the RDA Steering Committee (formerly the Joint Steering Committee for Development of RDA) as part of its strategic plan (2005–09) to replace AACR2. RDA was initially published in June 2010 under the title RDA Toolkit as an online resource by the American Library Association, the Canadian Library Association, and the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP). The text of RDA consists of 10 sections divided into 37 chapters, with 13 appendices, a glossary, and an index. RDA was widely implemented in 2013 by the Library of Congress, the British Library, and other major libraries (Pictochart 2021).

Historical Structures of Resource Description and Access (RDA)

RDA is a standard for descriptive cataloging initially released in June 2010, providing instructions and

guidelines on formulating bibliographic data. Intended for use by libraries and other cultural organizations such as museums and archives, RDA is the successor to *Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules, Second Edition (AACR2)*. (Wikipedia, 2022)

RDA emerged from the International Conference on the Principles & Future Development of AACR held in Toronto in 1997. It is published jointly by the American Library Association, the Canadian Federation of Library Associations, and the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) in the United Kingdom. Maintenance of RDA is the responsibility of the RDA Steering Committee (RSC). As of 2015, RSC is undergoing a transition to an international governance structure, expected to be in place in 2019. RDA instructions and guidelines are available through RDA Toolkit, an online subscription service, and in a print format.

RDA is a package of data elements, guidelines, and instructions for creating library and cultural heritage resource metadata that are well-formed according to international models for user-focused linked data applications. The underlying conceptual models for RDA are the Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records (FRBR), Functional Requirements for Authority Data (FRAD), and Functional Requirements for Subject Authority Data (FRSAD) maintained by IFLA, and will be compliant with the Library Reference Model, the IFLA standard that consolidates them. RDA Vocabularies is a representation of the RDA entities, elements, relationship designators, and controlled terms in RDF (Resource Description Framework). The Vocabularies are intended to support linked data applications using RDA. They are maintained in the Open Metadata Registry, a metadata registry, and released through the RDA Registry.

The human-readable labels, definitions, and other textual annotations in the Vocabularies are known as RDA Reference. The RDA Reference data are used in the production of RDA Toolkit content.

RDA Vocabularies and Structures

The RDA Vocabularies and RDA Reference are available under an open license. RDA is in step with the Statement of International Cataloguing Principles published by IFLA in 2009, and updated in 2016. The Committee of Principals for RDA, now the RDA Board, announced its commitment to internationalization of RDA in 2015. This is reflected in the new governance structure with representation based on the United Nations Regional Groups, comprising, Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, North America, and Oceania.

As of May 2017, the RDA Toolkit has been translated from English into Catalan, Chinese, Finnish, French, German, Italian, and Spanish. RDA Reference is

currently being translated into these languages as well as others including Arabic, Danish, Dutch, Greek, Hebrew, Swedish, and Vietnamese.

In March 2012 the Library of Congress announced that it would fully implement RDA cataloging by the end of March 2013. Library and Archives Canada fully implemented the standard in September 2013. British Library, National Library of Australia, and Deutsche Nationalbibliothek and other national libraries have since implemented RDA. However, in the United States, the cataloguing community expressed reservations about the new standard in regard to both the business case for RDA in a depressed economy and the value of the standard's stated goals. Michael Gorman, one of the authors of AACR2, was particularly vocal in expression of his opposition to the new guidelines, claiming that RDA was poorly written and organized, and that the plan for RDA unnecessarily abandoned established cataloging practices. Others felt that RDA was too rooted in past practices and therefore was not a vision for the future. In response to these concerns, the three United States national libraries (Library of Congress, National Library of Medicine, and the National Agricultural Library) organized a nationwide test of the new standard.

On 13 June 2011, the Library of Congress, the National Agricultural Library, and the National Library of Medicine released the results of their testing. The test found that RDA to some degree met most of the goals that the JSC put forth for the new code and failed to meet a few of those goals. The Coordinating Committee admitted that they "wrestled with articulating a business case for implementing RDA", nevertheless the report recommended that RDA be adopted by the three national libraries, contingent on several improvements being made. The earliest possible date for implementation was given as January 2013, as the consensus emerging from the analysis of the test data showed that while there were discernible benefits to implementing RDA, these benefits would not be realized without further changes to current cataloging practices, including developing a successor to the MARC format.

Several other institutions were involved in the RDA test. Many of these institutions documented their findings in a special issue of *Cataloging & Classification Quarterly*.

Adoption of RDA

Hider (2007) opined that returning to AACR and RDA, it is worth noting that another important part of the proposed revision is the inclusion of new guidelines on the creation of authority records. Authority records are not records of resources, but records of what AACR2 calls *headings* and what are otherwise known as access points. AACR2 differentiates headings from elements of description, as their form may be different, even if they might represent the same entity. For example, headings

for authors' names should start with the family name, but in the description, author's names appear as they are presented on the resource (usually family name last, at least in Western publications). Generally, the principle for description is to *transcribe* elements from the resource; whereas the principle for headings and other access points is one discussed already – vocabulary control. In cataloguing, particularly descriptive cataloguing, this is otherwise known as authority control. As already mentioned, index entries are controlled when indexers and cataloguers are limited in which ones they can use. The goal of authority control is to eliminate all choice, so that only one heading can be used for one entity or concept. Thus, an author's name may occur in various forms on different publications, but only one particular form can be used for any heading for that particular author. The same for subjects: one heading is established for synonyms such as football and soccer. All cataloguers must use the same heading, say 'Soccer,' and never use 'Football'.

The mechanism for controlling names and subjects, and also titles, is the authority file. This complements the bibliographic file, where the bibliographic records sit. The authority file comprises authority records, each one of which represents an authorized heading – be it the name of a person or organisation, the title of a resource or series title, or a subject term – and references (otherwise known as cross-references) to these authority records from 'unauthorized' variants of the authorized headings. Thus, to use the above example, there might be an authority record for the authorized heading 'Soccer', and a reference from 'Football' to 'Soccer'. Those involved in authority control work are responsible for the maintenance of the authority file. In theory, at least, every heading in all the bibliographic records should be linked to an authority record – perfect vocabulary control. In practice, the situation may be somewhat different. While authority control is generally regarded as a good thing for library cataloguers to perform, it is very expensive and not as essential as is the creation of the basic bibliographic record. Although RDA probably should add guidelines on authority records, the issue of whether they will be needed by many libraries is another matter – nowadays only an 'elite' group of libraries undertake systematic authority control work on their catalogues (generally those with the largest cataloguing departments) and the trend does not appear to be an upward one.

Lazarinis (2015) explained the the essential code for descriptive cataloguing is the Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules (AACR), first developed in 1967 and updated regularly until 2005. The revisions and updates of the standard are referred to as AACR2. RDA is a new standard for descriptive cataloguing aimed to be a replacement for AACR2. This chapter first presents the evolution of codes from Panizzi's Rules to RDA and then focuses on the structure of AACR2. The main aim of the

text is to provide an overview of the structural parts of AACR2 and the process of describing resources with the standard.

Willer and Dunsire (2013) at the end of the day, it is the record content, the (meta)data that has the most value not only to libraries and cultural heritage institutions at large, but also to users who access information about bibliographic resources. Library information systems change, as well as the media that serve as a transportation framework – formats and their structures, carriers and the means of distribution – from magnetic tapes to internet protocols, but bibliographic data can sometimes outlive the resource itself. Also, it is that content which is in the focus of interoperability and alignments processes – reuse and repurposing by information services and users. Without the rules that govern the content and the principles that govern the rules, no effective bibliographic control of publication production would be possible.

Neither a full history of cataloguing rules nor further analysis of international cataloguing principles comes under the scope of this chapter. It suffices to say, however, that the *Paris Principles* of 1961, and subsequent continuous efforts by IFLA bodies and supportive cataloguing experts worldwide to publish international standards, lists, and guidelines, formed the basis for national cataloguing rules, and thus enabled cooperation, exchange and reuse of bibliographic and authority data we see in the present day. Without that foundation, firmly based on accepting the values of UBC, the library services of today would be much less economic and efficient.

It can be said that changes brought about by the introduction of computers to cataloguing processes in the 1960s, with widening use in the 1970s, did not produce such a dramatic change as did the Internet and the World Wide Web in the 1990s. In the 1970s the basic problem was how to transform services, that is, cataloguing processes for a known bibliographic unit, from a paper to an electronic environment. In the 1990s, technological change impacted deeper into the bibliographic universe: the change of the object of description itself and the circumstances of interaction with it prompted the need to reconsider current assumptions and standards. In addition, the new view of the universe presented by the FR family of conceptual models stimulated a reconsideration of the theoretical foundations of cataloguing and, consequently, cataloguing rules. The rules themselves required an agreed set of international cataloguing principles as guidelines, in general provided by ICP in 2009, although they have recently been questioned, as we have seen.

The change of a national cataloguing code or set of rules is a deeply dramatic process itself. Depending on conditions, approaches can range from evolving present rules using the updated principles and the ISBD consolidated edition stipulations, through adopting rules

developed by others, to designing completely new rules based on the FR family of conceptual models. At this particular moment we can see developments going in all three directions.

The successor to the Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules – *RDA: Resource Description & Access* – was published in 2010 under the curatorship of the JSC/RDA. Its theoretical framework, terminology and structure are based on the conceptual models FRBR and FRAD, as well as ICP, although it declares its continuity with the AACR traditions. The *FRBR to RDA mapping* published in 2009 by JSC/ RDA emphasizes this relationship. Furthermore, the fact that RDA is referred to as being designed for the digital environment has a twofold meaning. The first is that it is designed as a ‘content’ standard, that is, it defines the attributes of entities at the smallest level of granularity of bibliographic information that allows their manipulation by human users as well as machines and services. The second meaning refers to the rules for description of not only traditional resources, but also digital resources which require new approaches to the description of content, media, and carrier as separate data elements.

The relationship of RDA to other content standards has already been mentioned, including its relation to the RDA/ONIX Framework and, indirectly, to ISBD. At the Harmonization meeting of the ISBD Review Group and ISSN Network with the JSC/RDA, all three parties agreed that the alignment of ISBD, ISSN and RDA was to be considered under the following constraints that directly refer to the content: the purpose of harmonization is to make RDA, ISSN and ISBD records functionally interoperable. That is, records valid under one of the standards should be capable of being mapped to either of the other standards. It is recognized that some issues will take longer to resolve than others and a few issues may prove to be irreconcilable, but steps can be taken to limit the impact of such differences.

The aim of the alignment is to enable harmonization between data produced according to the ISBD or RDA metadata content rules. Harmonization is achieved if the data is functionally interoperable; that is, data from both sources supports the functional requirements of each standard. Harmonization does not imply that the content is identical, so variation in content should be expected, although not sufficiently different to have a significant effect.

Dublin Core Metadata Initiative, (2006) in Willer and Dunsire (2013) however, opined that a metadata schema does not specify how to determine the values or descriptions for the defined elements. In Dublin Core, for example, the element ‘title’ is defined as ‘a name given to the resource’. It does not say where the name should come from, where to look for the name, and how to determine a title. If there is more than one possible name, which one should be used for the ‘title’? If no name has been given to the resource, how do you (or should you)

make one up? As another example, consider the Dublin Core 'subject' element, which is defined as the 'topic' of the object being described. 'Typically, the topic will be represented using keywords, key phrases, or classification codes. Recommended best practice is to use a controlled vocabulary'. The Dublin Core standard does not explain what a topic is, how to analyse subjects for a resource, or how to describe a topic or subject. It may be easy to find topics from text-based resources such as a website, an online article, or an e-book, but it will be difficult to analyse topics from a photograph or other pictorial works, as 'the delight and frustration of pictorial resources is that a picture can mean different things to different people. It will also

Hansson (2010) opined that up until the beginning of the nineteenth century there was an overall goal, at least in larger university libraries, to encapsulate all (scientific) knowledge, and the librarians were seen as generalists who could make their way around any of the traditional scientific disciplines of the universities. 'La République des savants' put the librarian in the centre as a custodian of knowledge and a guide to the secrets of the collections – a position which often rendered a high reputation among scholars. Many librarians were also seen in the very top intellectual circles from the seventeenth century onward.

This idea was, however, not possible to maintain in the 1800s when the accumulated growth of scientific knowledge rapidly surpassed the capability of any individual librarian to grasp, or indeed of any individual library. The most crucial development which led to this was perhaps that more and more scholars chose the scientific journal as their prime format for publication. Around the middle of the nineteenth century, the scientific journal had replaced the academic thesis as the most authoritative form of publication within most of the scientific community (Hansson 2010).

This development was problematic for libraries. Firstly, the tools which had been developed over centuries were centred on the monograph as the prime format for publication and, secondly, the tools for knowledge organisation, such as cataloguing and classification systems, were local in their construction. There had been no real need for international standardisation – and even if there had been, no one had taken on the task to create such standards. It was not until Antonio Panizzi of the British Museum Library (later the British Library) published his famous 91 cataloguing rules in 1841 that the thought of standardization really took off.

CONCLUSION

The defining role of bibliographic tools in the development of a library for the then contemporary society was simply not recognized. Today we agree that Panizzi's contribution to the development of library tools cannot be overstated. In an attempt to make the British Library the 'national library of the world', he embarked on the mission of creating standards for the most essential of library activities, the organisation and preservation of the collections. Everything should fit in and everything – all scientific knowledge – should be possible to retrieve based on the factual forms of publications and document forms that were dealt with in the library.

The development of standards was very much a part of the general zeitgeist of the late nineteenth century, and in the USA several steps were taken which came to have a profound impact on the identity of libraries and librarianship. The most obvious is of course the work of Melvil Dewey which in many ways came to complement Panizzi's work on the catalogue. Focusing on the intellectual organisation of library collections when he designed his much used classification scheme in 1876, he has come to stand as a brilliant example of the firm belief in standard solutions of his time. He wrote in the introduction to the eighth edition of the Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC) of the advantages of a new standard. Thus, RDA has come to replace AACR2.

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