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RDA: a new cataloging
standard for a digital future

RDA Update Forum
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This is (I think) the fifth RDA Update Forum, my second. Many of you have attended previous presentations.

There has been a lot going on, so I won't go over basic objectives and previous work, but will concentrate on progress since last June.

Before I get started, you will notice that RDA now has an official logo. You should start seeing it on RDA promotional materials.

Don't ask me to explain it. It's a logo.

In June I talked a lot about the London data model meeting and the collaboration between RDA and Dublin Core to define the RDA element set and vocabularies.

A working group has been set up, chaired by Diane Hillmann and Gordon Dunsire.

The group has identified enough funding to begin their work.

Members of the group met this morning with JSC and CoP members to formulate a project plan.

We are pleased that this important work is continuing under their leadership.

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Outline of today's presentation

❑ A new organization for RDA
❑ Content of the draft sections currently being reviewed
❑ Other decisions taken at the October 2007 JSC meeting
❑ Next steps

I will spend the rest of my time talking about progress on the text of RDA.

I want to cover four topics:

At its meeting in October, the JSC decided on a new organization for the text of RDA; I'll explain why we did that and go over an outline.

I will put the draft sections that are currently out for review in the context of the new organization, and describe some of the features of those sections.

I will briefly report on some of the other decisions taken at the October JSC meeting.

Finally, I will describe the work that still has to be done, and plans for the completion of RDA within the next 12 months [gasp!]

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It might be thought that it is rather late in the process to be deciding on the organization of the instructions in RDA.

Or it might be thought that the JSC regularly reorganizes RDA every six months.

I prefer to believe that the new organization was the result of the JSC's stronger grasp of what we are trying to accomplish –

this made it clear that there were some things that simply didn't fit –

 with our objectives

 with the way we see future implementations of RDA and of metadata in general

 and with the relationship of RDA to the underlying FRBR/FRAD models

So we took the opportunity for a final adjustment of the organization of RDA to make these things fit better.
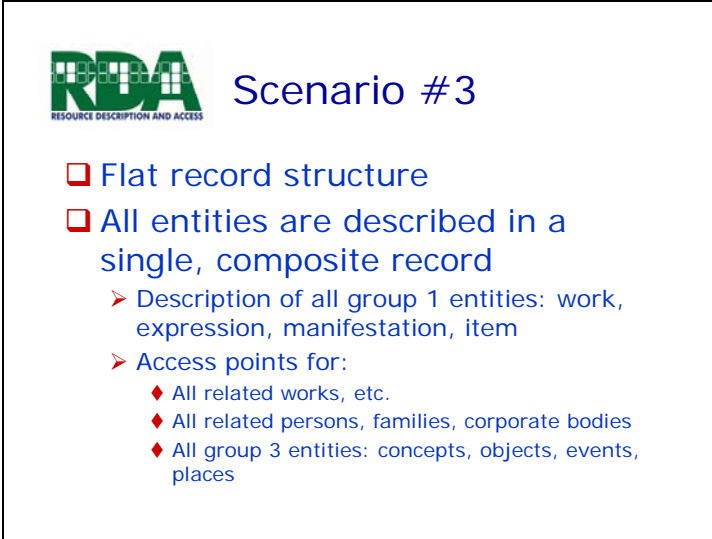
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I want to talk particularly about the implementation scenarios.

RDA needs to be implemented within a context that includes encoding of the data

and building data structures for storage and exchange.

The JSC's discussions have been informed by three high-level views of how to

encode, store, and exchange RDA data.

RDA needs to support all three.

However, RDA should not be limited to what is presently possible; RDA needs to look

to what we believe is the future.

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The first scenario – ironically designated #3 – is one we are all familiar with.

For any given resource, there is a single, composite bibliographic record which

describes all of the FRBR entities.

It includes a description of all the group 1 entities: work, expression, manifestation,

and item.

It describes and/or provides access points for

       all related group 1 entities,

       all relevant group 2 entities: persons, families, corporate bodies

       all relevant group 3 entities: concepts, objects, events, places ➔ i.e. subjects.

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Scenario #2 is also familiar:

It also includes a single composite bibliographic record for each resource,

but the access points in that record are linked to authority records

These authority records control the form of the access points for the group 1, 2, and

3 entities.

In some sense, the authority records describe and represent these entities –

but not quite – they represent the **access point** for the **name** of the person or work,

not the person or work itself.

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We believe that the future of bibliographic control will provide an environment that includes

separate descriptions of each entity: each work, expression, manifestation, person, body, concept, etc. etc.;

these are neither quite bib records or quite authority records; we haven't decided what to call them

these separate descriptions are linked to show relationships using resource identifiers;

these are (at the least) record IDs within a given system; (at most) uniform persistent resource identifiers

the descriptions may include access points for the entity described, but the real work of establishing relationships is done by the system using identifiers

The function of authority records within this scenario is not completely clear; I suspect that the authority records will be used to control the form of the names used (i.e. displayed) in access points; an entity (e.g. a person) may have more than one authority record for names established according to different rules and practices – the virtual international authority file.

On the other hand, one *could* implement this scenario without establishing access points at all.

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If the relational, object-oriented data structures of scenario #1 are really the future,

we began to wonder about the wisdom of dividing RDA into two main parts dealing with

description (bibliographic data elements) and access point control (authority data elements) –

certainly this sounds like scenario #2 – which we see as an intermediate stage on the road to scenario #1.

Access points and authority control seem less important in scenario #1.

RDA should point to the future, not accept the limitations of the present.

On the other hand, scenario #1 is clearly in the future, and probably not the near future.

Most of us will live in a scenario #2 or #3 environment for some time,

and RDA will have to work in that environment.

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RDA and FRBR/FRAD

- ❑ The alignment of chapters in RDA drafts with the FRBR/FRAD models was difficult to explain
- ❑ The new organization explicitly relates each section and chapter to an FRBR user task and an FRBR entity
- ❑ All the FRBR entities are covered
- ❑ Group 3 entities (concept, object, event, place) included as placeholders for future development

There were other problems with the old organization of RDA.

The alignment of chapters in the RDA drafts with the FRBR/FRAD models was difficult to explain.

The new organization makes this clearer by relating each section and each chapter to an FRBR user task and to an FRBR entity.

Note that **all** the FRBR entities are covered, including the Group 3 subject entities.

We have not developed the actual instructions for recording the attributes of Group 3 entities

(except for some of the instructions for *place*)

There are placeholders in the new structure which can be developed in the future.

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The handout includes a table showing

The content of each section and chapter of RDA

The mapping of RDA chapters to the FRBR user tasks and FRBR entities

The record structure for recording the elements for each chapter in each of the three
implementation scenarios

An earlier version of this table was what the editor presented to the JSC in October.

The JSC – and the observers present – immediately saw the benefits of this
organization.

These six pages may be your most useful guide to what RDA is designed to
accomplish and how it proposes to do so.

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Let me describe at least the top levels of this organization.

There are two main parts:

A series of sections defining the attributes that may be used to describe each of the FRBR entities

A series of sections defining the relationships that may be made among these entities

Each section begins with a chapter of general instructions, followed by chapters for specific entities

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RDA outline: Attributes

❑ Sect. 1. Recording attributes of manifestation and item
❑ Sect. 2. Recording attributes of work and expression
❑ Sect. 3. Recording attributes of person, family, and corporate body
❑ Sect. 4. Recording attributes of concept, object, event, place

The instructions on recording attributes are presented in four sections:

Section 1 deals with two of the Group 1 entities: manifestation and item

Section 2 deals with the remaining Group 1 entities: work and expression

Section 3 deals with the Group 2 entities

Section 4 deals with the Group 3 entities

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RDA outline: Relationships

❑ Sect. 5: Recording primary relationships between work, expression, manifestation, and item
❑ Sect. 6. Recording relationships to persons, families, and corporate bodies associated with a resource
❑ Sect. 7. Recording subject relationships

The instructions on recording relationships begin with sections that deal with

the primary or inherent relationships between the Group 1 entities for any given resource,

the relationship between a given resource and the Group 2 entities

the subject relationship between the resource and any of the entities.

In section 6, the relationship is between the person, family or corporate body and whichever Group 1 entity is appropriate:

e.g. a creator would be related to the work, an editor or translator would be related to the expression,

a publisher would be related to the manifestation, and an owner or custodian would be related to the item.

Similarly, it is expected that the subject entities would be related to the work – at least in a scenario #1 implementation.

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RDA outline: Relationsips

❑ Sect. 8. Recording relationships between works, expressions, manifestations, and items
❑ Sect. 9. Recording relationships between persons, families, and corporate bodies
❑ Sect. 10. Recording relationships between concepts, objects, events, and places

The remaining section dealing with relationships give instructions about

relationships between instances of the Group 1, 2 and 3 entities:

Work to work relationships, for example, or relationships between corporate bodies

or between concepts.

We are used to recording these as see also references in authority records.

In a scenario #1 implementation, these could simply be links between the records –

with an indication of the nature of the relationship.

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The draft sections currently under review correspond to what was formerly Part B of

RDA,

dealing with "access point control".

The draft begins with two of the three chapters in Section 2, Recording the attributes

of work and expression.

Chapter 5 is the general guidelines for this section.

Chapter 6 deals with "Identifying works and expressions"

Chapter 7 (not included in this draft) was issued as chapter 4 in the December 2005

draft and covered attributes for selecting a work or expression.

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The draft next includes the complete Section 3, Recording attributes of person, family, and corporate body.

Only one of the chapters in Section 4 is included in the draft. Chapter 16 covers place names and has the same scope as Chapter 23 in AACR2 – names of places used as the basis for access points for government bodies or as qualifiers for any preferred name.

The draft also includes Section 9, chapters on the relationships between instances of the Group 2 entities.

Finally, there are three appendices containing some rather specific AACR rules that it was felt were too detailed yet too incomplete to stand in the main sequence of RDA instructions.

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Our thinking about authority control is developing as we move forward with RDA.

The following is how I personally make sense of what is going on.

Authority records exist primarily to record decisions and facts:

decisions about the preferred and variant forms of access points and relationships to other entities;

and the facts that justify those decisions (mostly recorded in 670 fields in MARC 21 authority records)

RDA – following FRAD, I think – turns this upside down:

These chapters contain instructions for recording the attributes of the entities being described – the **factual** information,

including name usage (preferred and variant names), scope of coverage (dates, etc.),

other identifying information (occupation or affiliation of a person, for instance)

The chapters **also** include instructions for formulating a preferred access point for the name of the entity,

but the access point is not itself an element in the description (at least according to our editor);

The access point is **constructed** based on the preferred name element and may be qulaified by

including other elements as required to make the name unique.

In a future scenario #1 implementation, access points might not even be needed.

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In addition to reorganizing RDA, the JSC spent much of the October 2007 meeting dealing with the content of "Part B" which was issued for constituency review in December.

Among the actions taken were:

Confirmation of the changes relating to Bible uniform titles that were tentatively agreed to previously:

essentially the removal of "Old" and "New Testament" from access points for parts of the Bible

Agreement that treaties should be treated as specific cases of the general instructions relating to colloborations:

the preferred access point for the treaty will include the preferred name of the first signatory

Agreement that instructions to record information in English should be replaced by instructions to record in the preferred language of the cataloging agency; this will allow RDA to be used in a non-English context without modification

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The JSC also dealt with some specific issues in the former "Part A":

It was decided that a change in mode of issuance or in media type will require a new description for all resources;

but that only the issuance of a new base set of an integrating resource would require a new description

A proposal to include introductory words in titles was rejected.

The rule introduced in AACR2 1.1B1 was confirmed;

phrases such as "Walt Disney presents …" will not be considered part of the title proper.

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The JSC did **not** discuss specific comments in the constituency responses to Chapter 3 or to Chapters 6 & 7.

Some of the comments on Chapters 1-2, 4-5 are still not resolved.

The JSC has a lot of work left to do!

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One issue pervades the JSC's discussions:

How much change to current rules should we make?

Should this be a decision about RDA **content** or about RDA **implementation**?

If we have a clear sense of what the instruction ought to be, based on the objectives and principles of RDA,

how much weight should we give to the impact of implementation?

This discussion has progressed since the October meeting; we seem to be more included to make significant changes,

if they can be justified by principle, knowing that cataloging agencies may need to postpone implementation.

In such cases, typically it is a matter of implementing an alternative instruction instead of the main instruction;

coordinated implementation decisions are going to be an important part of the implementation of RDA.

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In the next few months, the JSC needs to resolve the remaining issues in the new section one (chapters 1-5 in the earlier drafts).
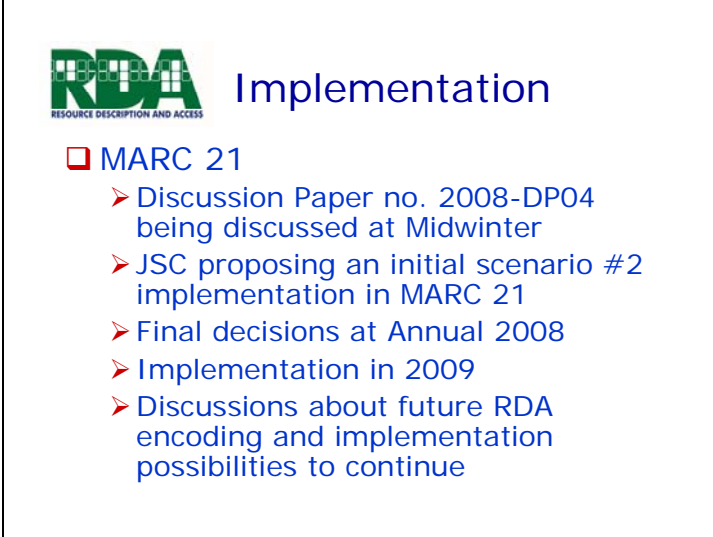
We need to make decisions on the comments received on Chapters 6 and 7, as well as those on the sections now being reviewed.

The appendices and examples need to be completed.

A draft of the General Introduction will need to be reviewed by the JSC.

All of this needs to happen in order to prepare a complete draft for constituency review in July 2008.

The plan to publish RDA early in 2009 and to implement before the end of 2009 is still in place.

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Marjorie talked about implementation plans. I want to mention one particular aspect of this.

When RDA is implemented in 2009, data will almost certainly be encoded in MARC 21 – even if better alternatives are developed in the future.

The JSC has begun to discuss this initial MARC implementation with MARBI: Discussion Paper no. 2008-DP04 will be discussed with MARBI this afternoon.

The JSC is proposing an initial scenario #2 implementation – descriptive data encoded in bib records, access point data in authority records.

Based on the MARBI discussion and further work, a final set of proposals will be presented at Annual 2008 in June,

and final decisions will need to be made at that time in order to be implemented prior to implementation of RDA in 2009.

The JSC is also encouraging the MARC 21 community to begin discussions about alternatives to MARC 21 as an encoding standard for RDA data and for descriptive metadata in general.

This process will take years to bear fruit, but we think it is time to begin.

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A reminder that the draft of sections 2-4 and 9 of RDA is currently available on the JSC website.

For informal discussion of the draft, subscribe to RDA-L.

Formal comments from within the ALA cataloging community can be made on the web form available on the ALCTS website.

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. . . Questions?