

To: Joint Steering Committee for Development of RDA
From: Kathy Glennan, ALA Representative
Subject: Place as an RDA entity

ALA thanks the JSC Places Working Group for this discussion paper that represents significant progress in addressing the treatment of place in RDA. We look forward to the development of a corresponding draft chapter on relationships associated with places.

ALA's review of this paper raised a number of significant issues which require further discussion.

Definition of Place

The current RDA definition of "place" coincides with the FRAD definition:
A location identified by a name.

In *Introducing the FRBR Library Reference Model*, "place" is defined as:
A given extent of space.

Both of these definitions point to place as a physical, geographic area. Having a clear understanding of what the term "place" encompasses will assist the JSC with determining how to move forward with place as an RDA entity.

Jurisdictions: place, corporate body, or a combination of the two?

Not surprisingly, ALA commenters had a number of concerns about how to treat jurisdictions in RDA as changes are made to align the instructions with the FRBR-LRM.

ALA believes that the jurisdiction and the geographical area the jurisdiction sits on or governs are conceptually distinct entities that have an extremely close relationship. We recommend retaining instructions relating to jurisdictions in Chapter 11, and not moving them to the "places" chapter, because they function more as corporate bodies than as places. However, we think it would be worth considering the creation of a specific sub-section for jurisdictions within Chapter 11. We observe that if the instructions for jurisdictions are retained in the chapter for corporate bodies, any attributes relating to place as jurisdiction also would belong in that chapter. Even if jurisdiction and place remain the same entity, the use of the place name in naming a jurisdiction should still be part of the instructions for corporate bodies.

That being said, ALA recognizes that instructions for jurisdictions cannot be completely untangled from those for place – they effectively combine aspects of both place and corporate body. Unfortunately, both are often known by the same name.

ALA commenters observed that separating jurisdiction from place would be a significant change, and one that would be difficult to manage while cataloging communities are tied to using authorized access points. Conventions regarding disambiguation would need to be

created for preferred names and authorized access points (see next section below). Not only would it be necessary to establish these as distinct entities, it would also be necessary to decide which one is applicable in relationship, particularly subject relationships. In some cases, this will be clear, but in many cases it will not — and this will be a difficult decision that we do not currently need to make (at least in most cases).

Disambiguating names of jurisdictions and names of places

ALA respondents raised questions about naming a jurisdiction vs. naming a place. Some see the current practice of considering jurisdiction and place governed as a single entity as a type of undifferentiated name. If these are intellectually separated into different entities, RDA would need to provide instructions so each could have a distinctive name. There would certainly be advantages in this approach, such as establishing separate entities for the Kingdom of Hawaii, the Republic of Hawaii, and the U.S. state of Hawaii.

It might be wise, however, to retain instructions for undifferentiated names in this situation. This would minimize the number of new “place” names that would need to be established in our authority files, and it would also lessen the impact on legacy data. Indeed, several ALA commenters expressed serious concerns about moving in this direction.

Grouping “Place” with “Agent”

Although the Working Group has suggested incorporating places into Section 6 (Recording Relationships to Persons, Families, & Corporate Bodies) and Section 9 (Recording Relationships Between Persons, Families, & Corporate Bodies), ALA believes that the better approach would be to create a new structure to specifically accommodate the FRBR-LRM entity place. (According to *Introducing the FRBR Library Reference Model*, place is a “res” separate from that of agent.) This would require:

- A general guidelines chapter for place, which would generally follow the pattern for Chapter 5 and Chapter 8.
- A specific chapter for place (along the lines of what this discussion paper suggests)
- A new section for recording relationships to place, applicable to all “res” entities
- An appendix with appropriate relationship designators for place

Places with changed names

ALA recommends developing instructions about what to do when a place name reverts to a former name. For example: Saint Petersburg, Russia was founded in 1703, then became Petrograd from 1914-1924, then changed to Leningrad from 1924-1991, and in 1991 reverted back to Saint Petersburg. Does this mean that there are two different entities named Saint Petersburg (qualified by date), or just one?

Different Language Forms of the Same Name

ALA recognizes that the draft chapter has simply taken the existing language in Chapter 16 for *Different Language Forms of the Same Name* (p. 7). However, we wonder why the current instructions limit this to “language forms”. The equivalents in Chapters 9 and 11 use the term “different forms”, which includes but is not limited to different language forms. We recommend expanding the place instructions using the model from Chapter 9 and/or 11. This would help address the situation when two different place names are available in the same language. For example, Waimea, Hawaii is also known as Kamuela, since there are other places in Hawaii also named Waimea.

Recording related places

In the draft chapter, one of the sections is titled *Place Associated with the Place* (p. 17). This seems more appropriate as a relationship element: Related Place. Associated with this relationship — as with other relationship elements in RDA — would be a set of relationship designators. This would allow a more precise recording of the hierarchical relationships between places (city–county–state–country), but would also support non-hierarchical relationships (e.g., the relationship between a corporate jurisdiction and the place over which it exercises its jurisdiction, or the relationship between a person and his/her birthplace).

ALA also observes that while the current definition is broad, “A place associated with the place is a significant location associated with a place”, only three elements are provided: *Country Associated with the Place*; *Other Jurisdiction Associated with the Place*; and *City or Town Associated with the Place*. Certainly as the scope of place is expanded, the instructions here also need to cover additional types of related places, such as rivers, oceans, mountains, watersheds, etc.

Country Associated with the Place

ALA commenters recommend rephrasing the scope of *Country Associated with the Place* (p. 17) to:

A country associated with a place is a country in which the place is located or otherwise associated.

This change would accommodate recording a related country for the Cook Islands, a self-governing country in free association with New Zealand.

City or Town Associated with the Place:

For the instruction, *Recording City or Town Associated with a Place* (p. 19), ALA believes that the examples are backwards. We expected this instruction to be illustrated by examples of places subordinated within such Cities or Towns. Thus, for the “Paris” example, we assume that a more appropriate explanation would be “Preferred name recorded as: Quartier latin”. Correcting the examples will help make the instruction clearer.

Core element status: Date Associated with the Place

While ALA has no objection to being able to record *Date Associated with the Place* (p. 19-20), we believe that the “core element” designation is only appropriate for use with jurisdictions. While it should be possible in certain situations to identify a date of establishment (e.g., Washington, D.C.), or a date of termination (perhaps due to a natural disaster), this type of information is not commonly available for places.

Language of the Place

ALA supports relating language to place (see p. 25), although we recommend using the phrasing “language associated with the place”. This would allow recording languages that are or have been spoken in a geographical place. If jurisdictions are part of the corporate body instructions, there is already “language of the corporate body” that would work to record the language of the jurisdiction.

Coordinates of the Place

The instructions in the draft chapter for *Coordinates of the Place* (p. 26-27) are terribly incomplete when compared with those in 7.4 for coordinates of a resource. The instructions only seem to provide for recording a single point. Places, particularly large and non-jurisdictional places, need to be georeferenced by bounding boxes or polygons. 7.4.2.3 contains much better instructions that allow for bounding boxes, and 7.4.3 has instructions for identifying the precise area covered by using coordinates for each vertex of a polygon. At a minimum, the instructions in 7.4.2.3 need to be repeated here so that bounding boxes can be recorded.

Missing elements

ALA recommends including “Associated Institution” as an element for place. Places of all kinds can be associated with corporate bodies (for examples, see the Deferred Issues section in [6JSC/ALA/43](#)).

We believe that “Field of Activity” should also be considered. A place could be particularly well known for some activity, such as winemaking or mountain climbing. Depending on the outcome of potentially separating jurisdiction from place, “government” could also be considered as a field of activity.

Constructing access points

While ALA appreciates the inclusion of instructions and alternatives to represent current practices in constructing access points for places (p. 28-32), we recommend a careful analysis of what should be presented as the primary instruction. It is likely that many of the existing practices should be considered alternatives.

Examples

ALA reviewers had a number of comments on the examples, which included suggestions for additional examples, request for clarifications, presentation of alternatives, etc. Because this is a discussion paper rather than a proposal, we have not included these comments in this response. However, ALA members would be happy to make suggestions on examples as efforts to create instructions for place as an RDA entity move forward.