To: Gordon Dunsire, Chair, RDA Steering Committee

From: Francis Lapka, Chair, RSC Rare Materials Working Group

Subject: Early Printed Resources and Rare Printed Resources

The present revision discusses and/or incorporates changes suggested in constituency responses to RSC/RareWG/1. The front matter divides discussion of the issues into three sections:

   I.   Guidelines for *early printed resources*: exceptions or alternatives
  II.   Guidelines for *rare printed resources*
 III.   Summary of changes in the revision

Guidelines for early printed resources: exceptions or alternatives

Multiple constituencies have suggested that some or all of the RDA guidelines currently labelled as *exceptions* for early printed resources could be converted to *alternatives*. The Working Group especially acknowledges the thoughtful arguments provided in RSC/RareWG/1/LC response. Furthermore, RSC/RareWG/3/LC response demonstrates, within the context of 3.4.5 Extent of Text, how guidelines currently labeled exceptions for early printed resources could be converted to alternatives for *all* resources.

The Working Group acknowledges that flexibility is a key component of RDA guidelines; this attribute is at least partially driven by the objective of *cost efficiency*. We agree that the compulsory nature of *exceptions* for early printed resources provides tension when faced with RDA's general practice of flexibility.

Upon further discussion, however, the WG contends that maintaining the exceptions as exceptions is crucial for *responsive to user needs*. We are reluctant to sacrifice user needs for cost efficiency.

RDA guidelines for early printed resources are modest in number. This is a testament to RDA's general compatibility with best practices for the description of rare materials.

Some of the guidelines are *not compulsory*. These include:
- Scope guidelines in 2.8, 2.9, and 2.10, which provide guidance on the roles of publishers, etc., of early printed resources.
- 3.12 Book Format, treated in RSC/RareWG/4. In the current revision, reference to early printed (etc.) is removed.
- 3.21.2.9, which will be folded in to 3.21.2.11 Other Details of Extent, with removal of references to early printed resources (see RSC/RareWG/5-rev).
- 3.22.1.4 Making Notes on Item-Specific Carrier Characteristics for an Early Printed Resource. Though not treated in present proposals, this section will likely be folded in to 3.22.1.3 Making Notes on Item-Specific Carrier Characteristics.

The current *alternative* for early printed resources in 1.8.1 enables the transcription of numbers, etc., in the form in which they appear in the resource. The Working Group proposes to make this an exception. Such an exception would not, however, require additional work on the part of the cataloger.

The exception in 2.2.2.2, for selecting a preferred source of information, is a response to differences inherent in early material. It also does not require additional work on the part of the cataloger.

All remaining guidelines for early printed resources are associated with RDA 3.4.5 Extent of Text – a *single* RDA data element. These exceptions serve to account for the full extent (i.e., pagination and foliation) of the resource. Such description sometimes requires addition work or cost. But this investment fulfills user needs.

For early printed resources, *extent* plays an amplified role in fulfilling the following user task:

> *identify* the resource described (i.e., confirm that the resource described corresponds to the resource sought, or distinguish between two or more resources with the same or similar characteristics)

Minor differences in extent are important keys to identifying variations of edition, issue, state, or impression, especially when other elements provide inconclusive evidence (as is frequently the case). Abbreviated extent statements mask such differences, making it very difficult to confirm that the resource described corresponds to the resource sought, or distinguish between two or more resources with the same or similar characteristics.

Abbreviated statements are all the more problematic because we lack a method to indicate that information is omitted. An abbreviated title or statement of responsibility will be evident thanks to the mark of omission, but an abbreviated statement of extent impersonates a full extent.

Users of early printed resources consume descriptions globally. Consistency of descriptive practice at an agency level is useful. But more often than not, users need to compare resources based on descriptions created by different agencies. For this task, *global* consistency fulfills user needs. A single (somewhat inflexible) RDA approach – in the form of exceptions for early printed resources – may be the best tool for enabling this consistency.

The same need for consistency, in service to the user task to *identify* a resource, drives the argument for treating the guideline in 1.8.1 (for transcription of numbers) as an exception, rather than an alternative. Differences in description due to differences in RDA application of this instruction will hinder user identification of early printed resources.

Guidelines for *rare printed resources*

RSC constituency responses to the proposal to create a category for *rare printed resources* were mixed. The Working Group acknowledges that agencies, when describing non-early rare resources, may wish to selectively apply the guidelines for early printed resources. The Working Group revises its proposals to accommodate this approach.

The Working Group is of varying opinion on how to implement such an approach. A portion of the group agrees with the suggestion provided by CCC (or a variation thereupon), in which an introductory guideline (in Chapter 1) notes that exceptions for early printed resources may also be applied for any resource for which an agency chooses to provide additional description. If this approach is taken, it may be unnecessary to define a category for rare printed resources. The revised form of current WG proposals assumes this approach.

Another portion of the group worries that the method described above would be too discreet. It proposes that each exception for early printed resources also be labelled as an alternative for rare printed resources.

Summary of changes in the revision

Change #1: definition of early printed resources

- The starting text now reflects that of the August 2016 update.

- The revised definition replaces "material" with "resource" (LC) and incorporates the concept of "hand-press *method"* (LC).

- The WG concedes that "nineteenth century" may not exhaustively accord with the period of transition to machine printing for *all* regions (CCC); but we maintain that the definition is clearer with the phrase than without. We look forward to dialogue with RDA communities in which "nineteenth century" does not represent the period of transition.

Change #2: treatment of "rare printed resources"

- Option 1 provides an introductory instruction noting that instructions for early printed resources may also be applied with any resource for which an agency wishes to provide a more detailed description (CCC).

- Following the CCC suggestion, the option 1 instruction is proposed as a new numbered section at RDA 1.12. Placement with RDA instruction at 0.9 Exceptions (instead) may also merit consideration.

- In option 2, each label identifying an exception for early printed resources would be accompanied by a label identifying the same instruction as an alternative for rare printed resources.

- Option 2 would require a definition of "rare printed resource" in the glossary. A revised definition is provided. Rewording is based on suggestions from ALA.

Change #3: fingerprints

- The WG withdraws the proposed change.

- The WG defers to the RSC on whether the reference to fingerprints should also accommodate digital fingerprints (LC).

- The WG defers to the RSC on whether the term fingerprints should be added to the RDA glossary (LC). If this is desired, existing definitions in ISBD or DCRM may serve as a starting point.

Change #4: change of labels in 3.22.1.4

- The WG withdraws the proposed change.

- The WG agrees that 3.22.1.4 should likely be consolidated with 3.22.1.3 Making Notes on Item-Specific Carrier Characteristics (LC). As noted in our original proposal, such changes will be reviewed and implemented in fulfillment of the WG's current task 3 ("Review RDA accommodation of Item attributes and relationships …"), which the group intends to complete in 2017.

The mark-up is based on existing RDA text, with highlighting used to signal additional revisions resulting from constituency comments.

Change #1: Definition of early printed resources

Marked-up version:

Glossary

early printed resource A ~~material~~ <mark>resource</mark> manufactured <mark>using a hand-press method,</mark> before the advent of machine printing in ~~approximately 1825-1830~~ the nineteenth century.

Clean-copy version:

Glossary

early printed resource A resource manufactured using a hand-press method, before the advent of machine printing in the nineteenth century.

Change #2: treatment of "rare printed resources"

Option 1: An introductory instruction (CCC suggestion)

An entirely new section. A clean copy only is provided.

1.12 Early printed resources
RDA contains instructions for the provision of more detailed descriptions for early printed resources. These instructions may also be applied (selectively, or in their entirety) for any resource determined by an agency to require a more detailed description. This determination may be made for any reason, including, but not limited to age, rarity, fragility, or value as part of a collection.

Option 2

In option 2, each label identifying an exception for early printed resources would be accompanied by a label identifying the same instruction as an alternative for rare printed resources. If implemented, this option requires RSC guidance on the structure of dual labels. No mock-up is provided here. This option would require definition of "rare printed resource," which is provided below.

Clean copy only

Glossary

rare printed resource A resource determined by an agency to require a more detailed description. This determination may be made for any reason, including, but not limited to age, rarity, fragility, or value as part of a collection.

Change #3 is withdrawn

Change #4 is withdrawn