To: RDA Steering Committee

From: Bill Leonard, CCC Representative to RSC

Subject: RDA 9.2: Addition of Elements for Given Name and Surname

CCC thanks the Technical Working Group for this discussion paper. CCC agrees with the goal of increasing the granularity of 'name of the person' element but is not convinced that these changes are sufficient or correct. It is not convinced that these changes will improve RDA's ability to accommodate the wide array of naming practices from around the world. CCC sees no evidence that the impact of these changes on the sub-types of 'name of the person' element has been taken into consideration.

Recommendation 1 – treat given name and surname as sub-elements of name of the person.

CCC generally supports the idea of creating sub-elements, it is not convinced the proposed changes have been sufficiently developed. Examining how other communities have already confronted this may be worthwhile in the long run, keeping in mind the intention of having RDA data align with existing ontologies already developed for use in the WWW. Perhaps an environmental scan of the approaches taken by other communities is merited, such as RFC 6350 and the detailed ontology that aligns vCard with RDF/OWL.

It is unclear how the sub-elements will be applied to the sub-types of 'name of the person,' specifically, 'variant name for the person' and 'preferred name for the person.' Will these sub-types also have sub-elements? If not, why not? Will it be necessary to distinguish the sub-elements of the name of the person from the sub-elements of the preferred name, and from the sub-elements of the variant name? If so, how? If not, why not?

The labels 'given name' and 'surname' have cultural connotations that may not support the goal of internationalization. As has oft been repeated, labels are simply labels while the definitions underpinning the labels provide the key to semantic distinction. Taking that argument a step further, culturally-neutral labels such as 'name sub-element1' and 'name sub-element2' with satisfactory definitions, might be better alternatives to 'given name' and 'surname.' RDA has already established a neutral approach in the second paragraph of the principle in RDA 0.4.3.7 with the use of "first element of the preferred name."

The current definition of surname in RDA verges on circularity by using both a synonym 'family name' and a generic term 'name' in the definition. The proposal retains that definition and offers no improvement on 'family name,' currently undefined in RDA.
While Merriam-Webster defines surname as 'a name borne in common by members of a family' this may be unnecessarily restrictive. In some cultures: spouses do not change their names upon marriage; children do not necessarily inherit a name from their father; children may use the surname of either of their parents, or a combination of the two; people may change their names; half-siblings often bear a surname different from other members of a family; the use of multiple surnames and compound surnames may vary from person to person; by changing a name upon marriage one does not cease to be a member of one's birth family. Bearing a common surname is not a requirement of membership in a family. Membership in a family is often a deliberate action of identification taken by an individual.

Recommendation 2 – Absence of a semantic relationship between surname and name of the family

The relationship between the 'surname' used by a person in RDA chapter 9 and the 'name of the family' used by a family in RDA chapter 10 will merit further exploration.

Recommendation 3 – Add patronymic as a separate sub-element of name of the person

It is unclear whether patronymic will also be added as a sub-element of the other sub-types of name of the person, 'variant name for the person' and 'preferred name for the person.'

Recommendation 4 – Review the RDA accommodation of components of name of the person as distinct sub-elements of LRM Nomen.

CCC agrees with the review in light of the IFLA LRM. The IFLA Names of Persons collection of documents could be pointed to as 'a' source, but not the exclusive source of data. The principle stated in the second paragraph of RDA 0.4.3.7 could be sufficient.