

To: RDA Steering Committee

From: Anne Welsh, RSC Secretary

Subject: FT2024-09: Addition of new terms to the RDA Form of Musical Notation  
Vocabulary Encoding Scheme

This Fast Track Proposal was submitted by Chelsea Hoover, Music Library Association Content Standards Subcommittee, via RSC North America Representative Robert Maxwell.

It was discussed by the RDA Steering Committee between 26 August and 1 September 2024, and voted on between 2-6 September 2024. There was one amendment suggested (FT2024-09 (3a)) to provide a cross-reference from the non-preferred *thoroughbass notation* to the preferred *figured bass notation*. Otherwise the proposal was accepted unanimously by the RSC, and the following changes will be implemented by the Technical Team Liaison Officer as soon as possible.

## Background

The MLA Content Standards Subcommittee received community requests for several additions to [RDA Value Vocabularies: RDA Form of Musical Notation](#).

In the production of the recommendations, the Content Standards Subcommittee considered the following issues:

- a. the definition of shape note notation. Ultimately the Subcommittee recommended this be limited to the notation scheme developed in the U.S. There are other similar schemes (e.g. one called “notation monogrammique” developed in Europe). MLA only needs “shape note notation” and did not propose other possible notation scheme terms at this time, reasoning that if something else is needed in the future it can be proposed then.
- b. the relationship between “shape notation” and “staff notation”. Some in NARDAC suggested a “see also” between “shape note notation” and “staff notation”. MLA researched this and declined to propose this link because shape note notation is not always given in staff notation form. That is, it is not a type of staff notation.

## Impact Statement

The inclusion of these terms in the [RDA Value Vocabularies: RDA Form of Musical Notation](#) will permit cataloguers to list these terms as controlled vocabulary terms in MARC 348 \$c

instead of listing these terms as uncontrolled vocabulary terms in MARC 546 \$b or MARC 348 \$c as is the current practice. OCLC Bibliographic Formats and Standards prefers that cataloguers record any musical notation system terms in MARC 348 \$c. This statement from BFAS is another incentive, aside from the music cataloging community feedback, for the proposal of these additional terms in the [RDA Value Vocabularies: RDA Form of Musical Notation](#).

These changes should not negatively impact cataloguers or cataloguing policies.

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#### **FT2024-09 (1) Add the term *chord symbols***

##### ***Definition***

*Clean text only:*

A form of musical notation that uses letters, numbers, and symbols to indicate the harmonic progression of a piece of music by naming chords in terms of their root pitches, quality (major, minor, augmented, or diminished), and added or altered pitches.

#### **FT2024-09 (2) Add the term *chord diagrams***

##### ***Definition***

*Clean text only:*

A form of musical notation that uses dots or other symbols arranged on a grid to represent the finger positions used to produce a particular chord on a fretted stringed instrument.

#### **FT2024-09 (3) Add the term *figured bass notation***

##### ***Definition***

*Clean text only:*

A form of musical notation that uses vertically arranged numbers and symbols which indicate harmonies in terms of intervals above a bassline.

**Use for:** thoroughbass notation

**FT2024-09 (3a) Add the non-preferred term *figured bass notation***

*Clean text only:*

**See:** figured bass notation

**FT2024-09 (4) add the term *shape note notation***

***Definition***

*Clean text only:*

A form of musical notation developed in the United States, usually also readable as staff notation, that conveys pitch information by using different geometric shapes for note heads. Do not use for similar notation schemes developed outside the United States.