

Comments on the draft of RDA, part one**2006-02-27**

From the national bibliographic agency, *The National Library of Sweden*, together with *Svensk Biblioteksförnings kommitté för katalogisering* (The Swedish Library Association, Cataloguing Committee)

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General views on the RDA outline and the revision process

It is an important step forward that the cataloguing rules will include both rules for authority work and relationships, and we look eagerly forward to these parts. That said, however, we do find it difficult to fully evaluate the rules for descriptive cataloguing in part one. The revision should have started with an analysis of which access points that could have authorized or controlled forms, that is, which authority work and what coded information should be carried out in the cataloguing process. After that exercise, it would be logical to turn to the navigational requirements that should be supported by the cataloguing process, which relationships that should be established. The decisions taken in these two stages of the revision inevitably affect the rules for description, so revision of the descriptive rules should come last, and not first as it has been presented now.

One example, of several possible, is 2.4.3.8, which accounts for cases that are normally taken care of with the help of authority records and controlled forms in records, not with notes.

We also need the final proposals regarding GMDs and SMDs, before it is possible to fully evaluate RDA, part one. The GMDs and some of the SMDs should be considered in the authority context. They do convey structured information about types and character of resources. They also need to be more clearly separated from other parts of the description as systematically retrievable information.

Presentation

We do approve of the separation of ISBD prescribed punctuation from the rules. That is a necessary and very welcome step. The alleged, system neutral presentation of examples in part one is often difficult to interpret, however, and we wonder how “system neutral” it actually is? It seems sometimes to be adapted to the printed context, sometimes to resort to ISBD presentation and sometimes to try to avoid any kind of predefined structure, which makes it very difficult to interpret. Why not give examples of different presentation interfaces, labeled OPAC presentations, ISBD or even MARC?

In this context the reader also wonders about the relationships that will be the topic for part two. In 3.1.3, 3.11 and 4.10 we see a range of examples where the rules prescribe notes, and we think a link in an online environment would be the best solution in most of

those cases – if they are not matched to different entity levels in a FRBR model. Some text in the note area may be automatically generated, if required. Maybe this will all be handled and explained in part two, but the current draft gives a strangely oldfashioned impression, due to this attempt to be system neutral. The overall impression is actually that it has a strong print context bias.

Scope

We appreciate the extension of the rules to archival resources and the clear demarcation between published and unpublished resources. We also find the specification of the functional objectives (0.1.2) of resource description useful. It is a fact however, that, much of the data produced to function as resource description also may function as access points. We understand that this function will be taken care of in another part, and it is well pointed out in 0.1.6, but it would probably be useful to recognize this use of descriptive data in some way already in 0.1.2 and relate it to the other functions.

We also think the potential, identifying function of the extent information should be recognized. It is not included in 0.1.4 or in 3.0, and we think it should be. (We refer to Elaine Svenonius' account of the use made of pagination statements to support identification in *The Intellectual Foundation of Information Organization*, 2000.)

We generally welcome the option given in 3.1.2 to indicate other available formats in a note only. It does touch, however, on the thorny issue of whether to make one or two records for a resource available both in printed and in digital format accessible online. We think it is necessary to have some flexibility in this area, and an online resource that is available in both PDF and HTML should not have two records, nor should there be separate records for an online resource that you can order, or make, your own printouts from, and such printouts. For an e-book, however, that is circulated and for sale both in print and online accessible formats, we do need two records. It might be tricky to decide whether a certain printout is produced as part of a batch of copies for general circulation, or whether it is just an occasional "paper copy", but still, shouldn't the rules give some guidance here?

The minimum list of mandatory elements, replacing the fixed levels, is a very good innovation. We have some doubts, however, about the prescription that the description should also include any additional elements that are required to differentiate a resource from one or more other resources bearing similar identifying information (0.1.6, 1.4). The intention of this prescription is not clear to us. We do not think, e.g., that a second (or third, fourth, etc.) impression necessarily needs to be differentiated. A national, bibliographic agency may decide to differentiate some categories even at the impression level, but not others. Another example: if an agency has decided to record only the title proper, and two resources would only be differentiated by other title information, this should not be a case for raising the level of ambition and record other title information for those two resources. If observed in that agency, it should be a case for making a note, but

not for extending the bibliographic level and never for making two records. This should be clarified.

Definitions

Several of the definitions seem inadequate or insufficient to us. Some examples:

1.1.1 – The term “resource” is not even defined, if you do not count “the entity that forms the center of focus for a resource description”. This is not presented as a definition, and it would be a bit of a circle, anyway. As RDA aspires to cater for all kinds of materials, we do appreciate the difficulties of giving a definition. We think it is needed, though, and it seems to us that the materials that will be in focus for “resource description” must a) be some kind of object (tangible or intangible) and b) have the inherent potential to be used as “resources”, to give certain information (as a bibliographic resource), or to exemplify something, or act as evidence in a certain context (as a stone fragment in a museum). Any kind of object may be used this way, but isn't it this potential “evidence” function that is the central quality? Not that it is the focus of a resource description, which is rather the consequence of the “evidence” function.

1.1.2 – The first paragraph speaks of a “single physical unit” as opposed to a “single logical unit (e.g., as a PDF file mounted on the Web)”. We think this is a false pair. The PDF is intangible, but it has a physical existence. In 3.4.0 “logical” is presumably used the same way, to designate a digital file. We find this use of the term “logical” misleading. In the computer environment, logical, or virtual, is used to designate a physically distributed arrangement of components that resembles a physically coherent arrangement from the operating environment's viewpoint. “Physical” in this context designates a physically coherent storage. It may well be that a PDF or a digital file is stored in a distributed system, but they may also, and probably more often, constitute physically coherent units. Why not use “digital” instead of “logical”? E.g.: “a single physical unit” as opposed to “a single digital unit (e.g., as a PDF file mounted on the Web)”, and in 3.4.0 “A unit is a physical or digital constituent of a resource (e.g., a volume, audiocassette, reel of film, or a map or digital file)”. – By the way, “map” is out of place in this last example, it is a content designator, not an object type as the other things listed.

2.3.0.1 – We have some hesitations about the definition of “title”, in particular the last part of the first sentence, ... “that names the resource or a work contained in it”. Is “resource” seen as a parallel of “work” here? As pointed out above, “resource” isn't even defined, but it seems to us that it is an object rather than an abstract entity, whereas “work” definitely is an abstract entity. As part one deals mainly with manifestations, it would be useful if the definitions clarified the difference between “work titles”, which we assume will be dealt with comprehensively in part three, and manifestation titles, which constitute “label” information, as well as conveying a notion of which work the

manifestation contains. This underlying lack of clarity can be traced in the following definitions of title proper, other title information, etc.

2.5.0.1 – We cannot find any definition for “edition”, and without that, the definition of “edition information” is “hanging in the air”, sort of. The definition in ISBD(M), 2002 revision, is good: “All copies of a publication produced from substantially the same original input and issued by the same agency or group of agencies or a person, whether by direct contact or by photographic or other methods.”

2.8.3.1 and 2.8.4.1 – We do not understand the difference between “manufacture” and “production” in these definitions. “Printing, duplicating, casting” are, as far as we understand, subcategories of “fabrication, construction, etc.”. This needs more elaboration.

2.10.0.1 – Same case as with “edition information”: “series information” is defined, but there is no definition of “series”.

Consistency

In 0.1.4 it is stated in the last paragraph that “the ordering of the chapters in part one and the arrangement of elements within each chapter are not intended to represent a fixed order for recording and storing descriptive data elements”. If that is so, why is RDA then still following the ISBD order of elements in all cases except one: Publisher is mentioned before place of publication. Why a change of order in that place and in no others?

Abbreviations are not used consistently. For example sometimes the text says “actually”, sometimes “i.e.”; in some places “for example”, in others “e.g.”.

Prescribed sources of information: It is not always absolutely clear what source of information belongs to the prescribed sources for various fields. For example following the new text of 2.2.3 and 2.2.4 would lead to a turning back to the old rule of putting information from accompanying text material for video and sound recordings within square brackets, something which was abandoned long ago. In AACR2 accompanying text material was considered to be a prescribed source of information for these materials.

1.1.4 Here it is stated that the text deals with “specific ways of *describing* a resource”. The examples then illustrate various resources, not various ways of descriptions.

1.6 The second optional paragraph should preferably be made the generally prescribed one. Information taken from automatically harvested metadata should be transcribed the way it was imported into the library system.

1.6.7 Generally, we question the prescriptions to record information in the descriptive areas in abbreviated form, if it doesn’t appear in abbreviated form on the source. The

extensive use of abbreviations seems to us to be adapted to the catalogue card format. It is really questionable how useful they are in the online environment!

We do welcome the flexibility given as regards transcription guidelines in 1.6, but we find 1.6.7 to be slightly in contradiction with the previously allowed flexibility. According to the previous instructions there ought to be an option to transcribe without abbreviations. The same objections apply to 2.5.0.3, where it should be made clear that the information may optionally be recorded or generated and kept as is. This is applicable to all following rules where reference is made to 1.6.

1.6.8 A note should always be done. I.e. the parentheses should be removed.

1.7.1 First paragraph could be excluded. It is over-explicit.

2.1.1 The text says “If there is no separate source of information identifying the resource as a whole...” What does this imply? Why not just “If there is no source of information...”?

2.3.3.6 The second paragraph is very hard to get a grasp of. Would it not become more easy to understand if the last sentence were written like: “If the changed other title information is not considered to be important (either ...), delete the **former** other title information, and record it as earlier title information (see ...).”

The see notes within parentheses point at a nonexistent paragraph 2.3.5.6c. It should be 2.3.5.6b.

2.3.7.3 In the second but last paragraph it is stated that “If the resource is of a type that would normally carry identifying information..., enclose the devised title in square brackets”. Something else should also be cited, e.g. an incipit, according to specifications in the rules.

2.3.8.3 According to 2.2.1.1. the title page image is a preferred source of information and should therefore not have a note saying “Title from title screen”. I.e. that note is only applicable for other resources.

The last note “Title from home page” could preferably be changed to “Description from home page”. Not only the title is taken from the home page, but the whole description.

2.3.1.12 a) Major changes iii) The meaning of this sentence is not clear. What is implied by “if it is a different corporate body”?

2.4.0.1 We believe that statements of responsibility should not only be limited to the titles and edition statements of the resource. They can also occur in other places.

2.4.0.3 We are hesitant to the paragraph starting with “Optionally”. We recognize that the option may be useful in certain cases, e.g. for automatically generated descriptions for digital resources, images etc. It may also be time saving when there is a great number of

minor changes in the statements of responsibility for serials. As written, however, the option seems to break with the principle of warranty. We would like to see some examples and a further elaboration of this stipulation!

2.4.0.7 When rewriting the rules why not discontinue the old rule prescribing the omission of titles of nobility, address, honour, distinction etc. and describe the resource exactly the way it looks?

2.4.0.8 The short phrase added within square brackets to the statement of responsibility should be used more often. Today everyone knows who the Rolling Stones are, but who will in 200 years?

2.4.0.12 This paragraph appears unnecessary to us and the example could preferably be included among the examples of 2.4.0.4 where it is already stated that the information should be “transcribed in the form in which it appears”.

2.8.1.2 According to 2.8.0.3 a note should be made to clarify the name if that is considered to be necessary. The examples in 2.8.1.2 contradict this rule and should therefore be changed. The rule in 2.8.5.3 gives yet another slightly different option.

Clarity

1.4 In the 3rd paragraph it is not absolutely clear what additional elements should be included. A further specification is advisable. And why is place of publication not a mandatory element?

1.5 A more precise specification of the elements to be included is needed. Separate those elements that are to be described in the way they appear in the prescribed source of information from the others. The main rule should be that most elements should be described in the way they appear in the source of information. For some parts, e.g. publisher, it could be advisable to leave the field open for a future use of authority information, taken directly from authority files. It should be more clearly stated everywhere which elements are optional or not.

1.6.2.2 and 1.6.2.3 Examples are missing

2.2.3 and 2.2.4 These two paragraphs should be more integrated. 2.2.4 is actually a subdivision of 2.2.3.

2.3.1.3 Does this rule actually cover all possible cases? How does one treat a publication in Arabic and Swedish, with two title pages and texts in both languages one starting from the right hand side of the publication the other from the left hand side?

2.3.1.7 Why divide the paragraph into a) and b)? Is not a serial also a resource issued in successive parts? Wouldn't it be clearer to unite the two paragraphs into one?

2.3.3.6c) The meaning of the text is a bit difficult to understand. What is actually the difference between the last two sentences and what is meant by the last sentence? Could it be possible to rephrase the paragraph to make it more understandable?

2.4.0.11 Should “translated from the Danish” really be considered to be a statement of responsibility”? It is the same in AACR2, but we would like to question it.

2.6.2.3 The example “1961/2” is not a very clear example. Does it mean “1961-1962” or “February 1961”? Many of the examples in the paragraphs on serial numbering become unclear since the ISBD punctuation was removed. See comments on consistency above.

2.8.0.3 Does the text here imply that the place of publication should be transcribed *exactly* the way it appears in the source of information? Should “Stockholm, Sweden” be transcribed like that, or can “Sweden” be left out?

2.10 It does not seem quite clear whether or when the rules in 2.10 apply to cataloguing of serial publications or to information in the series area. The same lack of clarity is present in the new chapter 12 of AACR2, but should not be perpetuated.

2.10.1.3 The rule stating “if the title of the series includes numbering as an integral part of the title, transcribe the numbering as part of the title proper of the series” leaves us wondering. Does that mean that in the MARC format the information should be doubled having the information both in #a and in #v?

For example:

490 #a Publication #122 of the Social Science Education Consortium, #x XXXX-XXXX
; #v122

and:

830 #a Publication of the Social Science Education Consortium ; #v 122

If the rule has another implication, that should be expressed more clearly.

2.12.1.1 This stipulation prescribes that standard numbers be recorded in the format prescribed by the respective standard. The ISBN standard, however, prescribes that the number be recorded without hyphens if intended to be machine processed. This is most likely the main use of the ISBN today and should consequently be the main recommendation. Recording with hyphens should be an option.

2.14.3 This prescription seems to be intended for dynamic, remote access resources? For static, remote access resources (an e-book, e.g.) it is important to know the date of cataloguing as evidence of when it was available, but that doesn't seem to be covered in 2.14.3.

3.4.1.7 a) The rule (which is an old rule) states that the total number of pages or leaves be recorded “excluding those that are blank or contain advertising or other inessential matter”. This seems to reflect a certain ambiguity as to what is actually the focus of these

descriptive data. If only pages containing text (or images) would be counted, that would convey information about the extent of the intellectual content, although still very inexactly. We think the pagination statement should be focused on description of the object. As a matter of fact, we do not think that cataloguers search for blank pages in the middle of a book to exclude them from the total sum. Is it not time to change this stipulation and exclude only *final blank leaves* or *final leaves* of advertisements?

3.6.2.2 How can it be possible to find information about the layout of the resource from any other source than the resource itself?

3.6.6.2 Same comments as on 3.6.2.2 above.

3.6.12.4 How is this supposed to look when put into a bibliographic description? Difficult to guess when ISBD punctuation is excluded. Should it be 56 p. : ill (PDF) or 56 p. : ill, PDF, or 1 PDF file (56 p. : ill.)?

6.4.0.3 A more standardised way of writing notes is advisable.

Specificity

1.6.2.1 It would be advisable to have an alternative to this rule “*Optionally* transcribe arabic and roman numerals in the form in which they appear in the source of information”. This comment also applies to 2.9.0.3

2.5.0.5 This rule is not applicable for analytic cataloguing.

2.7.1.3 and 2.8.1.3 We would like to question the decision to abolish “S.l.” and “s.n.” in favour of *Publisher unknown* and *Place unknown* and their equivalents in other languages. When exchanging records between different countries this means that information sometimes will not be easily understandable, or needs to be converted.

2.9.0.3 See 1.6.2.1 above.

2.9.1.3 We are not in favour of using [date unknown]. The example could instead be recorded as [between 1890 and 1910] as it is in AACR2.

3.4.1.13 Is it not a bit superfluous to both state that the resource consists of a folded sheet and that this sheet contains a certain number of imposed pages? We propose either:

1 sheet (folded twice), or

[8] p.

3.9.0.4 Is it not high time to abolish some of the very specific system requirement details for digital resources? Today most computers meet with standard requirements, so it

would be satisfactory to only have a short statement, saying which computer environment should be used (e.g. Mac or PC).

3.10.0.3 The stipulation on how to describe mode of access to remote resources does not say anything about giving URLs. This might be a tricky issue, sometimes it may be best not to give it in the bibliographic record, but sometimes it is warranted to give it in that context. Will there be any guidelines on how to handle URLs in different cases?

Early printed resources

The rules comprise a number of exceptions or special prescriptions for early printed resources, which is very welcome. In many instances these special prescriptions are very adequate (as in 1.6.2, e.g.), but in other instances they are not so good. In 2.9.0.3 the stipulation is to replace a date of publication in roman numerals with one in arabic numerals. This is not good, and it goes against the prescriptions given in the recent revisions of both ISBD(A) and DCRM(B). The prescription should be changed to recommend giving the year in roman numerals in these cases, and it should be remembered for part three that the date of publication is an *access point* that needs to be provided in a controlled form (provided anyway in machine readable formats).

The collational formula given as the first example in 3.4.5.10 is not correct. It is necessary in such a formula to have the figures in indexed position, and there should be no comma in this example. It should look like this:

a-v⁸ x⁶

The comma is only used to separate different sequences:

a-v⁸ x⁶, A-M⁸

Particularly inadequate for early printed resources are 3.5.0.3 (second paragraph in the table) and 3.5.1.4. In the first place, standardized dimensions that apply to an edition (and not only to a particular copy) do not occur until the time when binding machinery was used to produce publishers' bindings. This started to come about in the 1820s and developed gradually during the 19th century. For early printed resources before that time, that is, for the majority of early printed resources, dimensions should not be given in the technical description. It is simply wrong. Even for later periods of the 19th century dimensions should only be given for resources in publishers' bindings or publishers wrappers in the technical description. Dimensions could be given as copy specific information, of course, if considered important, but that should be an option only.

The bibliographic format, on the other hand side, like 4to, 4:o, or some other notation, should always be given, at least for hand press resources (until around the 1830s). This should be part of the technical description and there's no reason to give it within parentheses.

A question that comes to mind is what RDA understands by “early printed resources”? The resources that really require special rules are those which are produced during the hand press time. That is, before industrialization. The industrialization process started around 1830 in both Europe and the USA, and was generally accomplished around 1850. 1830 is a pragmatic mark off year.