

## RDA and China: The Internationalization of Cataloging

By Dr. Barbara B. Tillett

*Abstract: Dr. Tillett, current chair of the Joint Steering Committee for Development of RDA, describes the current and future development of RDA: Resource Description and Access, the new content standard for describing resources, to make RDA even more international. This article is based on a presentation by Dr. Tillett, "The International Development of RDA: Resource Description and Access" presented for Deutscher Bibliothekartag, Hamburg, Germany, May 23, 2012 and a related presentation for the Chinese expert group July 11, 2012.*

I was privileged to be invited by the Library Society of China and the National Library of China to give a two and a half-day seminar on RDA: Resource Description and Access, the new international cataloguing code at the National Library of China in Beijing, July 9-11, 2012, and to speak with the Chinese expert group on cataloging. Over 200 people attended and actively participated in the seminar. It is hoped this will be the start of spreading information about RDA within China and to encourage the use of this new international cataloguing code, and further, to encourage China's participation in the ongoing development of the code.

My hope (as the chair of the Joint Steering Committee for Development of RDA – the JSC, as it is called) is that China will actively contribute and help assure RDA is truly international and will assist the JSC in improving the instructions in RDA. During the work to translate RDA into Chinese, the translators will undoubtedly find areas that they feel would be important to reconsider in the context of Chinese cataloging and they are encouraged to work with the chair of the Joint Steering Committee to suggest improvements.

I believe I correctly understood that the current Chinese Cataloguing Rules are based on ISBD (description only) and are used for cataloging Chinese materials. <sup>1</sup>RDA also is based on ISBD for the basic data elements for description and has a mapping to ISBD provided in Appendix D.1. Work continues to further assure the interoperability of RDA and ISBD in direct meetings and discussion between the JSC and the ISBD Review Group in IFLA (International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions). But RDA goes much further than ISBD, to not only describe resources but also provide access and relationships among bibliographic data.

RDA is built on the strong foundations of the IFLA conceptual models of FRBR (Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records) and FRAD (Functional Requirements for Authority Data), as well as the International Cataloguing Principles (ICP), which China helped develop, especially during the fourth

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<sup>1</sup> Currently in China, the "foreign" materials are cataloged following AACR2 (Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition).

International Meeting of Experts on an International Cataloguing Code in Seoul, Korea in 2006. China had 7 representatives at that important meeting.

Even more, I personally hope the expansion of the JSC would at some point include a representative from China, which first would require the commitment of China to use RDA.

### Why not just keep AACR2?

The world has several cataloguing codes in use now, and the one used most widely throughout the world is the Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules, 2nd edition or AACR2. Despite its wide use, during the 1990's, there were many complaints from users around the world about how impossible AACR2 was after all of the amendments and updates.

The complaints were made during conferences; they were posted on listservs and stated in correspondence with the Joint Steering Committee for Revision of the Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules – better known as the JSC. We heard and also agreed that AACR2 was getting too complex, there was no logical structure to it, that it mixed up content and carrier terms, it was missing hierarchical and other relationships important to the things we catalog. That was understandable, because AACR2 was written before the Internet, before the IFLA conceptual models and cataloging principles were agreed. It was built on the card-based standards from IFLA (International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions, such as ISBD (International standard for Bibliographic Description)). The Joint Steering Committee, who is responsible for the rules, also received requests from around the world to please remove the Anglo-American biases so it could be used more globally. So those of us on the JSC at that time decided it was time to do something about these complaints.

In the late 1990's the JSC decided to actively try to make changes for the future of the *Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules*. We realized that all these changes in our environment and the development of conceptual models that give us a new way to look at our environment, also gave us new opportunities for improving how we catalog and how we deliver bibliographic information to users. In 1997, we held the **International Conference on the Principles & Future Development of AACR** in Toronto. We invited experts from around the world to share in developing an action plan for the future of AACR.

Some of the recommendations from that meeting have guided the thinking about new directions, such as the desire to document the basic principles that underlie the rules and explorations into content versus carrier. Some recommendations from that conference have already been implemented, like the new views of seriality – with continuing resources and harmonization of serials cataloging standards among the ISBD, ISSN, and AACR communities. Other recommendations from that conference are now goals for RDA, like further internationalization of the rules for

their expanded use worldwide as a content standard for bibliographic and authority records.

In 2002 work began on a draft revision of AACR2 then called AACR3. However, by April 2005, the plan had changed. The reactions to the initial draft of AACR3 came from rule makers around the world and from national libraries and other organizations, including the German Expert Group for RAK (Regeln für die alphabetische Katalogisierung) and the Deutsche Bibliothek (now the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek). Those international comments really helped improve the instructions and we were very appreciative of the time and effort that everyone contributed to the process. The comments particularly raised concerns about the need to move to closer alignment with the FRBR model and to build an element set. The Internet world and visions of the Semantic Web from Tim Berners-Lee had started really taking off and it was clear doing cataloging the way we always had, would no longer do. We could not continue to produce “records” in MARC format in systems that could not talk to the rest of the information community – we had to plan for the future to assure libraries remain a vital part of that broader community. We needed to plan for linked data environments.

So, a new structure and plan were developed and the name was changed to *Resource Description and Access* to emphasize the two important tasks of description and access. Importantly from the world perspective, we removed the Anglo-American emphasis so we could take a more international view.

### RDA Foundations

RDA is built on the strong foundations of the IFLA conceptual models of FRBR (Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records) and FRAD (Functional Requirements for Authority Data), as well as the International Cataloguing Principles (ICP). China helped develop the ICP, especially during the fourth International Meeting of Experts on an International Cataloguing Code in Seoul, Korea in 2006. China had 7 representatives at that important meeting and signed the agreement to accept and adopt the final version of the International Cataloguing Code.

From FRBR and FRAD conceptual models, RDA gets the entities, identifying attributes for each entity – including “core” elements, the relationships, and user tasks. From ICP, RDA gets basic principles like the principle of representation – used for transcription of data – and the principle of convenience of the user, for making the descriptions and notes understandable to our users.

Here’s the basic set of principles from ICP, and you will notice that the user comes first and should always be kept in mind when providing bibliographic descriptions and access points.

RDA is based on these new principles.



# General Principles (ICP)



- Convenience of user
- Representation
- Common usage
- Accuracy
- Sufficiency and necessity
- Significance
- Economy
- Consistency and Standardization
- Integration
- Defensible, not arbitrary
- If contradict, take a defensible, practical solution.

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RDA is also based on FRBR and FRAD. Published in 1998, FRBR reinforces the basic objectives of catalogs and the importance of relationships. This helps users to fulfill basic tasks with respect to the catalog – enabling people to find, identify, select, and obtain information they want. These are known as the FRBR user tasks.

FRBR also offers us a structure to meet these basic user tasks. It includes an entity-relationship model - a conceptual model of how the bibliographic universe operates – identifying all the things in this universe and how they are related. It allows us to group together the things that share the same intellectual and artistic content. It gives us a new way of looking at our bibliographic universe – it's like putting on a new pair of glasses to see the universe in a new way. It also includes the set of data elements or attributes that are mandatory for a national level bibliographic record. Those elements in FRBR translate directly into RDA as the core elements for bibliographic description and access.

RDA combines the FRBR conceptual model with cataloging principles to give us the intellectual foundations to build cataloger's judgment and better systems for the future.

The Joint Steering Committee (JSC) for the Development of RDA has paid close attention to developments in IFLA as well as in various metadata communities, and initiated collaborations with the international publishers' community that was developing its own metadata set called ONIX. Together we developed controlled vocabularies for media types, content types, and carrier types, called the RDA/ONIX Framework. In 2007, JSC representatives met at the British Library with key

representatives from Dublin Core, IEEE/LOM, and Semantic Web communities and agreed to examine the fit between RDA and other metadata models. Together we have created an initial registry for the RDA elements and controlled terms, available freely on the Web. In 2008 the JSC started participating in a joint effort to determine what revisions are necessary to accommodate the encoding of RDA in MARC 21 and the RDA/MARC Working Group presented proposals to MARBI - many have been approved with a few more to go. Those MARC changes are implemented in local integrated library systems just as is done regularly with other updates to MARC. However, it is clear MARC is a limitation to reaching the goals in RDA to be more usable in the Semantic Web/linked data environment.

In addition to the collaborations with other metadata communities, the JSC also started a process to collaborate with libraries and catalogers around the world to develop proposals for RDA to move to more principle-based rules. This process still continues. For example, the work with the music library associations in the US and Canada with the Library of Congress are still ongoing with much work yet to be done.

RDA addresses all the types of materials collected by libraries and archives, but. RDA defers to other specialized cataloging manuals for more specific rules that may be needed for these types of materials, such as cultural objects, rare materials, and cartographic resources.

I want to point out that the "missing" things from RDA (that are under development) were not in AACR2 either. We heard complaints that we should stay with AACR2 until RDA is "done", but even with the 'missing' or 'placeholder' chapters, RDA has more than AACR2 ever had (e.g., many of the Ch. 3 attributes for modern carriers, the Ch. 4 acquisition and access information, the authority control instructions, and relationships).

RDA development has been a very open process; the types of collaborations and reviews of drafts were unprecedented. That openness had its good aspects (diversity of input) and bad aspects (negative press, misconceptions based on outdated drafts, etc.).

### Bridge

Just as AACR2 provided a transition from the card catalog to the on line catalog, so it is with RDA. We will have a transition or "bridge" period for a few years as we move from current practices and formats and systems to the next generation of systems, and the RDA instructions will continue to evolve. RDA will be updated in a more timely and dynamic manner than AACR2 was. The JSC looks forward to suggestions for improvements that are more principle based and more in line with FRBR and FRAD. There is still much work to be done and we look forward to your help.

The Joint Steering Committee stated our goals for RDA as: a new standard for resource description and access, designed for the digital world.

In other words RDA is: a Web-based tool that was to be optimized for use as an online product. Work continues to reach that goal with feedback from users to the publishers of the RDA toolkit. The JSC also has long planned for a “concise” version of RDA and hope such a product will be available in the next year or two. Although RDA was not designed to be a print product, customers demanded a print version, but it is hoped with a “concise” version in print, the larger product will not be needed in print. There are general instructions and then more detailed information, if needed, which the user of the online product would not even need to see unless needed.

Other goals were to be:

\* a tool that addresses cataloguing all types of content and media and we have for the most part achieved that goal with ongoing work as I just mentioned,

and

\* a tool that results in records that are intended for use in the digital environment – through the Internet, Web-OPACs, etc. – and most recently to make the descriptions useful in the linked data environment of the Semantic Web. The records created using RDA’s metadata set of elements are intended to be readily adaptable to newly emerging data structures. Here are the specific goals stated for RDA – and clearly we have not reached all of the goals yet, but are making good progress and welcome proposals for improvements:



## RDA – The Goals

- Rules should be easy to use and interpret
- Be applicable to an online, networked environment
- Provide effective bibliographic control for all types of media
- Encourage use beyond the library community
- Be compatible with other similar standards
- Have a logical structure based on internationally agreed principles
- Separate content and carrier data
- Examples – more of them, more appropriate

The goal for internationalization is also stated in the instructions at 0.11 of RDA itself, shown here:

## 0.11 Internationalization

### 0.11.1 General

RDA is designed for use in an international context.

RDA conventions relating to language and script, numerals, dates, and units of measurement are summarized under [0.11.2–0.11.5 RDA](#).

### 0.11.2 Language and Script

Specified elements are transcribed in the language and script in which they appear on the source of information from which the data are taken. However, allowance is made for recording the data in a transliterated form if they cannot be recorded in the script used on the source from which they are taken, and for recording the data in a transliterated form in addition to the form in the original script.

Other elements are generally recorded in the language and script preferred by the agency creating the data.

There are, however, a number of instructions that specify the use of an English-language term (e.g., *publisher not identified*) or provide a controlled list of terms in English (e.g., the terms used to designate media type, carrier type, base material). Agencies creating data for use in a different language or script context may modify such instructions to reflect their own language or script preferences and replace the English-language terms specified in RDA with terms appropriate for use in their context. Authorized translations of RDA will do likewise.

Even though RDA is written in English and the vocabularies are in English, the design is such that RDA can be easily adapted to other language contexts-- not just the translation of the instructions, element set, and vocabularies, but also the standard phrases like "place of publication not identified". The intent is that the AACR2 instruction of the type "give in English" are gone, replaced usually with an instruction to provide by the language, script, calendar, etc., preferred by the agency creating the data (there are 63 such instructions in RDA!). So here is more evidence of the internationalization of RDA.

The following figure shows what the RDA Toolkit Web page looks like. There are tabs at the top left with access to the RDA instructions, other tools and mappings – such as to the MARC format, and access to other resources, such as AACR2, and free access to the Library of Congress Policy Statements.

# RDA Toolkit Web Page

The screenshot shows the RDA Toolkit web page. The header is dark blue with the RDA Toolkit logo and the text 'Welcome, Barbara B. Tillett' and 'Library of Congress'. Below the header is a navigation bar with 'RDA', 'TOOLS', and 'RESOURCES' tabs. The main content area is titled 'GET STARTED WITH THE RDA TOOLKIT!' and includes sections for 'Log in to Your Subscription', 'Create a User Profile', 'Browse or Search', and 'Need Assistance?'. A sidebar on the left contains a table of contents for the RDA Toolkit.

RDA will be available in multiple languages. There are translations underway for French, German, Spanish, Italian, and Chinese, and several more languages are in negotiation. We are very grateful to all of the translators for this good work.

The RDA element set and value vocabularies are available through the Open Metadata Registry (OMR) in anticipation of future uses in the international linked data environment. This registry provides terms and their definitions with a URI so that the translations of those terms can all be linked and the preferred language can be displayed. More work towards internationalization!

## The Joint Steering Committee

So next let's look at the organizational structure that keeps RDA going. Currently, there is a Committee of Principals – who are the directors or their representatives from the British Library (BL), the Library of Congress (LC), the Library and Archives Canada (LAC), and the National Library of Australia (NLA), and directors from the respective professional library associations, that is, the American Library Association (ALA), the Canadian Library Association (CLA), and the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP).

There is also the group of publishers who manage the Funds (which is the money generated by sales of cataloging rules that supports the maintenance and development of the rules) – the publishers are at the American Library Association, the Canadian Library Association, and CILIP. In this context they are known as the Fund Trustees.

Then there is the Joint Steering Committee (JSC) comprised of representatives from the constituent organizations: the American Library Association's Association for Library Collections and Technical Services' Committee on Cataloging: Description and Access (CC:DA), the Australian Committee on Cataloguing (ACOC), the British Library, the Canadian Committee on Cataloguing (CCC, whose representative is also from the Library and Archives Canada), the CILIP/British Library Committee on RDA, the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek (DNB), and the Library of Congress.

Christine Frodl from the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek attended the November 2011 meeting of the Joint Steering Committee as our newest member. She presented the first proposal from the DNB regarding additions to the Appendix on Initial articles to reflect the importance of those parts of speech for German and other languages. That proposal was approved with some minor corrections and is now part of the RDA instructions as of the April 2012.

At that November JSC meeting in Glasgow we also elected a new JSC chair and new Secretary – myself and Judy Kuhagen, respectively.



## JSC in Glasgow, Nov. 2011



Kevin Marsh (ACOC)

Christine Frodl (DNB)

John Attig (ALA)

Barbara Tillett (LC)

Deirdre Kiorgaard (ACOC)

Marg Stewart (CCC/LAC)

Gordon Dunsire (CILIP)

Thurstan Young (past-JSC Sec)

Alan Danskin (BL, JSC Chair in

2011)

This is a picture of most of us at the November 2011 meeting in Glasgow. We are already an international group, but wish to make the JSC even more international.

According to Caroline Brazier, the British Library representative on the Committee of Principals, the addition of the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek (DNB) representative to JSC recognizes the substantial commitment to RDA already made by DNB, which includes preparation of the German translation. DNB has also announced its

intention to implement RDA during 2013, which was one of the criteria that the CoP looked at when considering new members.

There is a commitment from the Committee of Principals to admit up to two further members to JSC within the next three years. The JSC recommends scheduling a fundamental review, to take place not later than end 2014, to establish a principled approach to participation in RDA development and JSC membership.

So what does the JSC do? Primarily we develop and maintain RDA content. This is primarily the instructions and examples, but also mappings to ISBD and the MARC formats. Other mappings are contributed to the RDA Toolkit by various other sources.

The JSC is also responsible for developing and maintaining the RDA Element set and the various value vocabularies – like the lists of types of content, types of carriers, and so on.

Most of us are very actively involved in training – providing workshops and seminars on RDA around the world. For example, this year we have reached out to Taiwan, Malaysia, China, New Zealand, Mexico, Argentina, Colombia, and Venezuela in Latin America. We also do general presentations and maintain contact with national libraries and rule makers around the world, such as through meetings of the European RDA Interest Group – EURIG.

We continue collaborations with the various communities, like the publishers for updating the RDA/ONIX Framework, and ongoing work with the ISSN community as well as the ISBD and FRBR Review Groups in IFLA – to assure interoperability of our standards. There is active work with the music library community and renewed discussions with the law libraries, religious libraries, and rare book and archival communities.

The JSC also maintains a Web site where you will find news and announcements as well as links to the various presentations, working documents and archival documents, list of the members with contact information, and much more.

The JSC is eager to get suggestions and help from around the world to help improve RDA and get the instructions more principle-based.

### Cataloging Evolution

In the past we saw cataloging as mostly constructing bibliographic descriptions with heading strings for access that were used in card catalogs and linear displays in OPACs. With RDA the focus has changed to describing resources – building the set of identifying characteristics and relationships that are important to meet the FRBR User tasks – find identify, select, obtain and following the International Cataloguing Principles.

RDA itself is evolving and there are several areas we have targeted that need work for those areas where AACR2 has what have been called “case law rules” – situational based rather than based on principles. As I noted before, there was no time to properly consult with the various communities before RDA was first released, so some of the AACR2 rules were carried forward as RDA instructions - but we are now resuming that work particularly for music, law, and religion. For example the April update, included 135 changes comprised of 78 proposals and 65 “Fast Track” change - meaningful change is going on.

Our goal is to help build well-formed metadata to describe the various FRBR entities and relationships.

The process for making changes to RDA is continuing a formal proposal process through the Joint Steering Committee. For countries without a specific representative on the JSC, proposals should be sent to the JSC Chair.

The JSC currently plans to have one annual face-to-face meeting – for 2012, it will be November 5-9 in Chicago, Illinois. At those meetings, we discuss the proposals and the constituency responses to the proposals to reach agreement. We also are considering having some proposals come between the annual meeting times, and such proposals may be discussed through emails or conference calls of other means to reach agreement, so we could potentially have two major updates to the RDA Content each year – probably in April (as we did in 2012, with the proposals approved at the November 2011 meeting) and possibly again in October for any mid-year proposals that we agree to. As I noted earlier, there is no more waiting for years before the new printed updates are published and purchased.

Major corrections to the RDA instructions or examples or other content go through the same channels as for proposals to the Joint Steering Committee. However, simple corrections of errors, like typographical errors can either be done immediately for each month’s “release” or through a Fast Track process where the JSC currently uses GoogleDocs to comment on the proposal – those that are approved go into the next RDA Toolkit release and others may be discussed during conference calls to resolve to be assigned to a constituency to prepare a formal proposal.

Additionally anyone finding errors in the RDA Toolkit itself, or anyone with questions about the RDA Toolkit or its functionality, can use the online feature to talk with ALA Publishing. There is a “Support” button on the Corrections for errors or to make comments/ or ask questions about the RDA Toolkit itself – and its functionality, go to ALA Publishing – direct link within the RDA Toolkit online. The Toolkit is following the model of all software currently on the market by issuing enhancements that will enable it to remain a viable tool by rapidly improving its functionality in response to users’ needs.

For RDA content and in support of RDA users, the Library of Congress offers a service to answer any questions from anyone anywhere that have to do with RDA

instructions. Just write to [LChelp4rda@loc.gov](mailto:LChelp4rda@loc.gov). We may find that similar services will emerge that would be language-based, but this has not yet been discussed.

And for any other questions, suggestions, or comments, everyone is welcome to write to the JSC Chair by writing to [JSCChair@rdatoolkit.org](mailto:JSCChair@rdatoolkit.org).

RDA was developed by international participants with feedback to drafts from around the world that greatly helped improve the results, and the work is ongoing. The JSC looks forward to contributions as well as comments on proposals from everywhere. We want to assure that RDA continues to evolve to describe all types of entities and relationships in the bibliographic universe that meet the needs of users around the world. With more translations underway, it will continue to grow as a multilingual tool. We welcome international participation and look forward to working with China to make RDA even better.