



Volume 2, 2012

Ad Astra per Aspera: Aspiring to Excellence in Challenging Times

RDA and the Copy Cataloger

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Abstract

Catalogers in academic libraries are facing a fundamental change in our guidelines and instructions on formulating descriptions for our library resources. A new cataloging standard, *Resource Description and Access (RDA)*, has been developed as a replacement for the *Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules*. This new standard is based on the conceptual models of FRBR (Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Data) and FRAD (Functional Requirements for Authority Data).

The new standard and its online toolkit were tested over a 9-month period (July 1–December 31, 2010) by the Library of Congress and 26 additional partners. The Library of Congress, National Library of Medicine, and National Agricultural library announced in June 2011 that they have decided that RDA should be implemented no sooner than January 2013. However, that does not mean there are not already RDA bibliographic records in our cataloging utilities with plans in the offing to add more. This paper gives a review of RDA development along with a description of how the University of Kansas prepared and trained copy catalogers to handle RDA bibliographic and authority records during the RDA test period (October 1, 2010–January 1, 2011) and our plans for ongoing training during this interim period prior to full implementation.

Review of RDA Development and Testing Timelines

A revision to the *Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules Second Edition* (AACR2) which was going to be called AACR3 was begun in 2004. After reviewing a draft of AACR3 in Dec. 2005, the Joint Steering Committee (JSC) decided to instead develop a new standard for resource description, to be called *Resource Description and Access* (RDA). In 2007, the JSC announced that RDA would be implemented by the end of 2009. So in early 2009, the Library of Congress (LC), the National Library of Medicine, and the National Agriculture Library developed plans for how they were going to test RDA and invited the library community to apply to participate in the testing. However, in Dec. 2009, the RDA publisher announced that RDA would not be available until June 2010. On June 22, 2010, six years after work started on revising the cataloging rules, *RDA: Resource Description and Access* and the RDA Toolkit were publically released (Joint Steering Committee for Development of RDA, 2010).

Once the RDA Toolkit became available, the testing of RDA by the U.S. National Libraries and the RDA test partners began. From July to October, the testers practiced using the Toolkit and cataloging in their local systems. No RDA records were to be added to WorldCat or LC's catalog until October 1, 2010. A few libraries jumped the gun and added their records to WorldCat so we printed off some of these early records and passed them around in the department to see what a "real" RDA record looked like.

The testers officially began their cataloging and authority work in the cataloging utilities on October 1st and cataloged through the end of December. Even though the test ended at the end of December, several RDA testing libraries decided to continue to catalog using RDA rather than switch back to AACR2.

The national libraries analyzed the survey forms sent in by the testers from January through early June. Shortly before ALA Annual 2011, the Test Coordinating Committee announced their decision to implement RDA no sooner than January 2013 (Library of Congress, n.d.).

Preparation for RDA at the University of Kansas

University of Kansas Cataloging Department staff members were kept informed of the progress of RDA development at department meetings and by forwarding email announcements from listservs like OCLC-CAT (OCLC, 2011) and PCCLIST (Library of Congress, 2006). Additionally, we registered for the series of RDA related webinars offered by the Association for Library Collections & Technical Services (ALCTS). Several of these webinars are now available free of charge on the ALCTS webinar archive website (ALCTS, n.d.). We reserved a room so we could project the webinar in a group setting and view the webinars together. Cataloging and in some cases, acquisitions staff, were encouraged to attend. Some of the webinars were helpful while others were not applicable to our organization.

Cataloging staff were most interested in seeing examples, which is why they felt that the most helpful presentation was Adam Schiff's, *Changes from AACR2 to RDA: A comparison of examples*. This is a presentation that was done for a pre-conference in April 2010 which Schiff put up on his website with the accompanying speaker notes. His slides include lots of examples of what the AACR2 form would look like vs. the RDA form (Schiff, n.d.). We went through the slides in a cataloger's meeting in May 2010 and attended the two-part ALCTS webinar he presented in Feb. 2011. LC also had some examples (Library of Congress, 2010b) available on their RDA training website which we passed around and we looked at some records prematurely added to WorldCat.

With the start of the RDA test looming in October, we started updating documentation in September. We updated the student cataloging manual to include RDA examples. Because staff attended the webinars and had an idea of what changes to expect, we decided to wait to update the staff manuals until we had a better idea of what types of issues we would encounter in the cataloging records.

One of the more noticeable additions in an RDA bibliographic record is the new content, media and carrier type fields that replace the general material designator (GMD) in the 245 title field. A list of values for the new 336-338 fields, were created and distributed to staff and students. Staff members who only catalog monographs were given the values for monographs while those who catalog multiple formats were given additional examples in their lists.

For authority records, we decided to update headings in bibliographic records to whatever form was found in the 1xx of the authority record, regardless of the rules used to construct the heading. To give staff an idea of what to expect in RDA authority records, I condensed the information about authority headings from LC's RDA training modules (Library of Congress, 2010c) into separate documents based on authority heading tag and distributed to staff in the Authorities Unit and catalogers of complex copy. Staff members were also given copies of LC's "US RDA Test Policy for the Extra Set: Use of Existing Authority and Bibliographic Records" document that instructed testers to input the RDA form of heading in a 7xx field if there was an existing authority record and to put the AACR2 form in the 7xx field if there was not an existing record (Library of Congress, 2010a). These 7xx forms are searchable in WorldCat so staff members are able to find matching authority records regardless of cataloging rules if it exists.

RDA Statistics and Observations

The University of Kansas (KU) receives shelf-ready materials from Yankee Book Peddler for materials that have the Library of Congress code (DLC) in the cataloging source (040) field, e.g. with DLC |c DLC or an 042 field with lccopycat. Everything else is cataloged by Cataloging Department students and staff. The Department dedicates about 100 hours per week to cataloging new monographs. This is split amongst a student who catalogs 050 copy for 12 hours per week, a few Library Assistant IIs for about 50 hours per week and the remaining 35-40 hours are split amongst Library Assistant IIIs, Unclassified Professionals and a Librarian.

During the test period of July-December 2010, we loaded 77 RDA bibliographic records. Four records came in shelf-ready which means they bypassed the Cataloging Department. KU staff and students cataloged 73 of the records. Seventy of the 77 records were coded pcc in the 042 authentication code field. PCC in the 042 field indicates that the record was created by a Program for Cooperative Cataloging library and that all name and subject headings have been checked against the appropriate authority files. These records are considered 050 and cataloged by students. The student gave the first dozen or so RDA records she encountered to staff for review. Though the records were interesting to look at, we did not see any glaring errors so the student cataloged the remaining RDA records without staff review.

There were 7 non-PCC records that were cataloged by staff. Out of curiosity I searched these records again in WorldCat and found that two records that had an encoding level (Leader/17) of "I" for full-level input by WorldCat participants had been changed to AACR2 by LC which was not supposed to happen according to their instructions.

As mentioned earlier, some of the RDA test libraries have continued to catalog using RDA. Since the end of the test period (i.e. Jan. 1, 2011), we have added 485 RDA bibliographic records to our catalog. 233 of these records are shelf-ready records. The student cataloged 226 of the 252 RDA items that came to the Department while staff members have cataloged 19 titles.

The RDA change that causes the most consternation is the direction to transcribe a title as it appears on the piece which can result in titles in all capital letters in the 245 field. According to the RDA transcription rules, this is not wrong but catalogers and those who do database maintenance continue to pause when they see titles in all caps. This might be due to past practice when records in all caps in our catalog were considered temporary records or it could just be that it just looks wrong.

It is easy to spot RDA records due to the addition of the new 336-338 fields. We did find a couple of records that were coded as RDA but they did not have the 336-338 fields or any other RDA specific fields so we changed the 040 coding to indicate AACR2 when we added the record to our catalog.

Future Plans for RDA

The Test Coordinating Committee has said that they will not implement RDA until January 2013 and only if certain conditions are met (U.S. RDA Test Coordinating Committee, 2011). To meet the conditions of providing full RDA record examples in the RDA Toolkit and to lead and coordinate RDA training, the Library of Congress staff who participated in the RDA test last year will be re-trained so that they can begin cataloging using RDA rules again in November 2011. LC hopes to train the remaining catalogers to use RDA in the summer of 2012. The training materials developed to retrain the initial RDA testers and anything developed to train new staff in summer 2012 will be available on LC's website.

The Program for Cooperative Cataloging (PCC) formed 3 task groups in June 2011 to look at issues related to implementing RDA. The PCC RDA-Decision Needed task group prioritized a list of 61 RDA related tasks into high, medium, low, and no decision needed (Program for Cooperative Cataloging, 2011b). The Hybrid Bibliographic Records group investigated the use of AACR2 and RDA elements in the same bibliographic record. In general they have recommended that catalogers can add relationship designators (i.e. \$e's) to bibliographic record headings and that MARC fields 336, 337 and 338 can be added as long as the general material designator (\$h) in the 245 field is not deleted (Program for Cooperative Cataloging, 2011d). The AACR2 & RDA Acceptable Heading Categories task force looked at identifying RDA compatible authority headings, those that can be made into RDA headings with some machine manipulation and those that need human intervention (Program for Cooperative Cataloging, 2011c).

There was an additional task force that recently released its report. The PCC ISBD and MARC task force was not formed due to the adoption of RDA per se, but the rationale for their decision is based in part on RDA. The task force recommends omitting ISBD punctuation in bibliographic and authority records. For the most part ISBD punctuation is redundant because the MARC subfields convey the same idea as the punctuation. In fields where punctuation is the only delimiter, e.g. parallel titles, the group recommended the addition of new MARC subfields (Program for Cooperative Cataloging, 2011a).

As for KU's future plans for RDA, we will continue to take it slow for the short term. If there is an increase in non-PCC RDA records, additional training to review the differences between AACR2 & RDA with staff catalogers will be provided along with updates to the staff cataloging manuals. If the recommendations from the Hybrid Bibliographic Records group are adopted, we will review any existing 336-338 fields on the AACR2 record to ensure the information is accurate but we will not be adding these fields if they are lacking.

KU is a NACO (Name Authority Cooperative) participant so we will start creating RDA authority records on the "Day 1" determined by the PCC. We will use LC's training materials and any documentation supplied by PCC along with the RDA Toolkit to train those staff members who currently contribute records to NACO.

As for cataloging, our current plan is to start training staff to update minimal records and/or create original RDA bibliographic records in the summer of 2012 if LC's updated training documentation is available on their website. In the past, staff members were resentful of training that was only given to a select group, so we will provide the same training to all catalogers, regardless of their classification level. After training we will see what aptitudes develop and readjust workflows as needed.

Conclusion

The RDA webinars and presentations that staff members have attended have made them aware of the more significant differences between RDA and AACR2 so that they can easily recognize an RDA record. Staff members have not had the opportunity to work extensively with RDA bibliographic records because the majority of RDA bibliographic records KU has encountered have been 042 pcc records which are either received shelf-ready or cataloged by the student. This will change in the summer of 2012 when KU will start training staff to update minimal level records to RDA and to create original RDA bibliographic records.

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