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# THE DEVELOPMENT OF *RESOURCE DESCRIPTION & ACCESS* AND ITS IMPACT ON MUSIC MATERIALS

BY KATHRYN P. GLENNAN



The development of *Resource Description & Access* (RDA)<sup>1</sup> as a replacement code for the *Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules*, 2d edition, 1998 revision (AACR2),<sup>2</sup> stemmed from repeated calls to revise the cataloging rules to better accommodate the ever-evolving types of resources that libraries acquire. For example, the papers presented at a meeting of experts in 1997 at the International Conference on the Principles and Future Development of AACR explored various contentious topics, such as content versus carrier, issues related to seriality, and the definition of a work.<sup>3</sup> In 2004, the Committee of Principals for AACR appointed an editor to create an initial draft of AACR3, to take these and other issues into account. At that point, no one foresaw the final direction the new code would take. It evolved over six years with changes in name, organization, content, and the vision for how cataloging records can interoperate with other data on the Internet as we move into the future.

This article explores the development of RDA in relation to current cataloging standards, with a particular emphasis on the impact its implementation will have on description and access for music materials. After reviewing RDA's foundations and how stakeholders were involved in RDA development and review, the article highlights unique aspects of

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Web sites identified in this article accessed 16 November 2011.

1. Developed in a collaborative process led by the Joint Steering Committee for Development of RDA (Chicago: American Library Association; Ottawa: Canadian Library Association; London: Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals, 2011–), loose-leaf; first published online as *RDA Toolkit: Resource Description & Access* (2010), <http://www.rdatoolkit.org/>.

2. Prepared under the direction of the Joint Steering Committee for Revision of AACR, a committee of the American Library Association, the Australian Committee on Cataloguing, the British Library, the Canadian Committee on Cataloguing, the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals, the Library of Congress (Chicago: American Library Association; Ottawa: Canadian Library Association; London: Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals, 2002).

3. *The Principles and Future of AACR: Proceedings of the International Conference on the Principles and Future Development of AACR: Toronto, Ontario, Canada, October 23/25, 1997*, ed. Jean Weihs (Ottawa: Canadian Library Association; London: Library Association Publishing; Chicago: American Library Association, 1998). Versions of the papers posted prior to the conference are available at <http://www.rda-jsc.org/indconf.html>.

RDA, how its data can be used within and beyond MARC, and explores some significant changes from AACR2. The concluding sections focus on RDA testing, revision, and implementation.

### RDA'S FOUNDATIONS

In spite of the changes throughout its development, RDA remains deeply rooted in Anglo-American cataloging traditions while also aligning with newer international conceptual models, such as the *Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records* (FRBR)<sup>4</sup> and the *Functional Requirements for Authority Data* (FRAD).<sup>5</sup> In addition, the International Federation of Library Association's (IFLA) recent "Statement of International Cataloguing Principles,"<sup>6</sup> under development concurrently with RDA, informed the new code's overall objectives and principles.

### RDA DEVELOPMENT AND REVIEW

Interested stakeholders, including specialized communities, have played a significant part in RDA's development. Members of MLA's Bibliographic Control Committee reviewed each draft, providing detailed comments on issues related to description and access for music resources. MLA's suggestions and examples were often incorporated into RDA.<sup>7</sup>

### A CONTENT STANDARD

RDA, unlike AACR2, is strictly a content standard. It contains few rules about punctuation, order, and formatting. Display and encoding standards, such as *ISBD: International Standard Bibliographic Description*<sup>8</sup> and MARC21 bibliographic and authority formats<sup>9</sup> are relegated to appendices; they are not integrated into the instructions or examples.

4. IFLA Study Group on the Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records, *Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records: Final Report*, UBCIM Publications, new ser., 19 (Munich: K. G. Saur, 1998). Latest version, as amended through February 2009, available at: [http://www.ifla.org/files/cataloguing/frbr/frbr\\_2008.pdf](http://www.ifla.org/files/cataloguing/frbr/frbr_2008.pdf).

5. IFLA Working Group on Functional Requirements and Numbering of Authority Records (FRANAR), *Functional Requirements for Authority Data: A Conceptual Model*, ed. Glenn E. Patton, IFLA Series on Bibliographic Control, 34 (Munich: K. G. Saur, 2009).

6. Available at [http://www.ifla.org/files/cataloguing/icp/icp\\_2009-en.pdf](http://www.ifla.org/files/cataloguing/icp/icp_2009-en.pdf).

7. These included: MLA's proposal to change AACR2 rule 5.5B1 ("Extent of item" for notated music); the current text of RDA instruction 6.28.1.3.4 ("Pasticcios, Ballad Operas, Etc.: Single Excerpt"); and some of the examples in RDA instruction 6.27.4.2 ("Variant Access Point Representing One or More Librettos or Other Texts for Musical Works").

8. Standing Committee of the IFLA Cataloguing Section, IFLA Series on Bibliographic Control, 44, consolidated ed. (Berlin; Boston: De Gruyter Saur, 2011). Preliminary consolidated edition (2007) available at: [http://archive.ifla.org/VII/s13/pubs/ISBD\\_consolidated\\_2007.pdf](http://archive.ifla.org/VII/s13/pubs/ISBD_consolidated_2007.pdf).

9. See Library of Congress, Network Development and MARC Standards Office, *MARC Standards*, <http://www.loc.gov/marc>.

### RDA'S ORGANIZATION AND PHILOSOPHY

While many of the AACR2 rules migrated to RDA, they no longer appear in the same order or context, forcing catalogers to look at the instructions differently. RDA's organization follows the framework laid out by FRBR and FRAD, grouping instructions by entity and describing separate data elements and their attributes. Because of this structure, RDA does not organize instructions by the ISBD areas of description, nor does it contain separate chapters that lay out the rules for descriptive cataloging by format. Rather, all instructions relating to a particular element, such as title, are grouped together and apply to all resources. These organizational changes will enable RDA to remain flexible as library resources evolve; existing instructions can be extended to new formats in a way that was not possible under AACR2.

In a variation on AACR2's levels of description, RDA specifies which elements are core, or essential, to include when describing a resource or identifying a person or corporate body. In some cases, core elements are conditional. For example, "Extent is a core element only if the resource is complete or if the total extent is known."<sup>10</sup> Determining which elements should be included beyond the core set is left up to cataloger's judgment, which is informed by the following user tasks, based on FRBR:

- find—i.e., to find resources that correspond to the user's stated search criteria
- identify—i.e., to confirm that the resource described corresponds to the resource sought, or to distinguish between two or more resources with similar characteristics
- select—i.e., to select a resource that is appropriate to the user's needs
- obtain—i.e., to acquire or access the resource described.<sup>11</sup>

With an emphasis on transcription and cataloger's judgment, RDA omits many of AACR2's case-based rules. The elimination of prescriptive rules for nearly all situations requires catalogers to focus on the purpose of including data elements when creating a record. However, some specialized instructions remain in RDA, primarily for the complex areas of naming musical, legal, and religious works.<sup>12</sup>

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10. RDA instruction 3.4 ("Extent").

11. RDA instruction 0.0 ("Purpose and Scope").

12. RDA instructions 6.14–6.26.

### RDA DATA WITHIN MARC

RDA was developed to work with three different implementation scenarios, ranging from a flat-file database through a relational/object-oriented database.<sup>13</sup> Thus, RDA records work in the current library environment, using existing library systems and integrating with existing cataloging records. Recent changes to the MARC21 bibliographic and authority formats have offered greater granularity to accommodate RDA data.<sup>14</sup> When fully encoded and indexed, these new fields and subfields will enable new ways to search cataloging data, allowing for retrieval based on previously hidden or inconsistently indexed information. For example, a user could obtain a list of Spanish women composers active in the twentieth century, or works for soprano, clarinet, and piano. This specificity in coding will also permit easier migration of RDA records from MARC21 to future international data encoding standards.

### RDA DATA BEYOND MARC

Because display and encoding conventions are not folded into RDA, the new cataloging code offers the profession an opportunity to look beyond our existing standards to find ways to make library data available on the Semantic Web.<sup>15</sup> In 2007, the Dublin Core Metadata Initiative/RDA Task Group began its work to “develop formal representations of the RDA element sets and value vocabularies for the use of humans and machines.”<sup>16</sup> Once this data registration is officially published, RDA elements and concepts will be available for use outside of MARC21 in linked data environments, possibly utilizing the RDF (Resource Description Framework) data model. Indeed, the publication of RDA in 2010, along with the desire to make library data more visible on the Web, prompted the Library of Congress to initiate an evaluation of the current bibliographic framework with an eye toward maximizing the use of bibliographic and authority data outside of existing silos.<sup>17</sup>

### CHANGES FROM AACR2

The changes from cataloging records created according to AACR2 to those using RDA range from the cosmetic to the substantial. Because

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13. Tom Delsey, “RDA Database Implementation Scenarios” (1 July 2009), Joint Steering Committee for Development of RDA, <http://www.rda-jsc.org/docs/5editor2rev.pdf>.

14. See Library of Congress, *MARC Standards*, “RDA in MARC,” <http://www.loc.gov/marc/RDAinMARC29.html>.

15. See <http://semanticweb.org/>.

16. Diane Hillmann, et al., “RDA Vocabularies: Process, Outcome, Use,” *D-Lib Magazine* 16, no. 1/2 (January/February 2010), <http://www.dlib.org/dlib/january10/hillmann/01hillmann.html>.

17. See “Transforming our Bibliographic Framework: A Statement from the Library of Congress” (13 May 2011), <http://www.loc.gov/marc/transition/news/framework-051311.html>.

AACR2 was developed in the era of card catalogs, it contains rules that limit the inclusion of data in a cataloging record due to space considerations. RDA does not share those constraints; its principles and objectives focus on user needs, representation, and indication of relationships, among others.<sup>18</sup>

RDA's principle of representation leads to more transcribed elements. For example, AACR2's "rule of three," which appears throughout the code,<sup>19</sup> has not carried over to RDA. Thus catalogers will not be limited in the number of authors to transcribe, and will not use "Polyglot" if an item is in three or more languages. In addition, RDA permits only a small number of abbreviations, chiefly in the area of measurements. Fortunately, an important subset of abbreviations remains for specific situations in music: SATB (etc.) for voice ranges; "op." and "no." in access points for works; and thematic index abbreviations (allowing for continued use of BWV instead of Bach-Werke-Verzeichnis in access points, for example).

Although AACR2 utilized the general material designation (GMD) to identify the format of an item, this element was used selectively in the United States. For example, catalogers placed "[sound recording]" after the title proper when describing audio materials, but did not use "[music]" for scores. RDA takes a different approach to providing this kind of information with the creation of three new elements to replace the GMD: content type, medium type, and carrier type. Used together, these new elements offer more specificity, such as "performed music—audio—audio disc" for a compact disc. Unlike the GMD, these new elements are not necessarily intended for display to users but could certainly be used to refine search results.

The principle of common use or practice informed a change in describing notated music. RDA removes the AACR2 distinction between "p. of music" and "score"; all notated music not in part-format will be described as "scores" in RDA records. This principle also led to the use of "study score" instead of "miniature score," and "audio disc" instead of "sound disc" for physical description terms. In addition, RDA permits use of terms in common usage based on an institution's preference, so a compact disc could be described as "1 audio disc," "1 CD," or "1 compact disc." Options such as these appear throughout RDA; their presence argues for the establishment of best-practice guidelines to ensure consistency for indexing and record sharing purposes. While the Library of Congress will continue to issue its own interpretations for RDA, known

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18. See RDA instruction 0.4 ("Objectives and Principles Governing Resource Description and Access").

19. For examples, see AACR2 21.6B1, 21.7B1, 21.23A1, 21.30A1, 25.5C1, and 25.30B1.

as Library of Congress Policy Statements, the Music Library Association has an opportunity to create its own guidance for areas specific to music cataloging.

RDA's approach to naming works varies from that of AACR2. For example, RDA makes a clear separation of responsibility between an opera libretto and the opera itself, considering them two separate works. This means that librettos are entered under the name of the author of the text, not under the name of the opera, for example "Da Ponte, Lorenzo, 1749–1838. *Don Giovanni*," not "Mozart, Wolfgang Amadeus, 1756–1791. *Don Giovanni*. Libretto." Of course, to assist catalog users, the AACR2 approach to naming the work will still appear as a cross-reference in authority records.

In another change from current practice, RDA has separate instructions for recording specific elements, including preferred title, medium of performance, date of the work, numeric designation, and key. Once recorded, these elements can be used as needed to form a name/title access point that uniquely names a particular work. Currently, catalogers will still need to create these character strings, which are similar to AACR2's uniform titles. In the future, a discovery tool could create this type of access point on-the-fly for users, adding elements as necessary to break conflicts as they arise in the catalog, or these additional elements could simply appear as search-limiting facets, available on demand.

Some challenges arise when making distinctions in access points for expressions of works, such as translations, arrangements, different recorded performances, and so forth. RDA has yet to fully grapple with the implications of carrying out these instructions to their full extent, since creating or displaying lengthy character strings can clutter record displays. Discovery tools will need to balance this issue with the ability to provide much greater specificity to users. For example, to distinguish among a library's various sound recordings of Mahler's Second Symphony, the RDA access points could start with the established character string for the work itself, and then add elements addressing the format, the date of the recording, and the conductor:

- Mahler, Gustav, 1860–1911. Symphonies, no. 2, C minor. Performed music. 1949. Bernstein.
- Mahler, Gustav, 1860–1911. Symphonies, no. 2, C minor. Performed music. 1963. Bernstein.
- Mahler, Gustav, 1860–1911. Symphonies, no. 2, C minor. Performed music. 1975. Mehta.
- Mahler, Gustav, 1860–1911. Symphonies, no. 2, C minor. Performed music. 1986. Rattle.

Mahler, Gustav, 1860–1911. Symphonies, no. 2, C minor. Performed music. 1987. Bernstein.

Mahler, Gustav, 1860–1911. Symphonies, no. 2, C minor. Performed music. 1994. Mehta.

Mahler, Gustav, 1860–1911. Symphonies, no. 2, C minor. Performed music. 2010. Rattle.

RDA's principle of relationships results in additional information being recorded with access points, so that users will have explicit information about how two works are related (for example, "paraphrase of" or "musical variations based on"),<sup>20</sup> or about the role of an individual in relation to the work or expression (such as "recording engineer" or "arranger of music").<sup>21</sup>

#### TESTING RDA

Throughout RDA's development, members of the library community expressed concerns about the viability of implementing a new code, raising questions such as whether a revision of AACR2 could accomplish almost as much, or if RDA's changes were significant enough to warrant the costs of purchasing access to the new code and retraining catalogers. In response to such concerns, the three U.S. national libraries (the Library of Congress, the National Agricultural Library, and the National Library of Medicine) formed the U.S. RDA Test Coordinating Committee in 2009. This committee recruited additional institutions and funnel groups to participate in creating bibliographic and authority records using RDA in a live environment over a three-month period. MLA, in conjunction with the Online Audiovisual Catalogers, became one of the test groups, ensuring that records for scores, sound recordings, and audiovisual materials would be represented in the test data. The actual test took place in late 2010; the committee then analyzed the data gathered from each tester. Its final recommendations were released in June 2011, including specific goals to be achieved before implementing RDA no earlier than January 2013.<sup>22</sup>

#### REVISING RDA

RDA was published in 2010 as the *RDA Toolkit*; although it is designed to function as an online resource, ALA Publishing also issued RDA in a

20. For more examples, see RDA appendix J.

21. For more examples, see RDA appendix I.

22. Library of Congress, U.S. RDA Test Coordinating Committee, "Report and Recommendations of the U.S. RDA Test Coordinating Committee," *Testing Resource Description and Access (RDA)* (9 May 2011; revised for public release 20 June 2011), <http://www.loc.gov/bibliographic-future/rda/rdatesting-final-report-20june2011.pdf>.



loose-leaf print version a few months later (see n. 1). The Joint Steering Committee for Development of RDA continues to consider proposals for change; the code will be updated as these are approved. The Music Library Association has already put forth proposals to clarify the use of the container as one of the preferred sources of information for sound recordings, and to allow for identifying music producers in the artistic and/or technical credit element. Other issues related to music remain under discussion, such as:

- How to balance the principles of uniformity and representation when using generic titles in access points
- How to name accompanying ensembles beyond orchestra, string orchestra, and band in medium-of-performance statements
- How to differentiate the names of compilations of literary works by composers versus compilations of their musical works
- How to record medium of performance when the work has both solo voices and chorus
- How to name the opera and the libretto if the composer was responsible for both.

The MLA Bibliographic Control Committee remains committed to working on these and other issues to ensure that RDA will effectively support finding, identifying, selecting, and obtaining music resources.

#### RDA IMPLEMENTATION

Although the U.S. cataloging community is on the path to implementing RDA in 2013, the new code still has both strong supporters and detractors, as evidenced in e-mail correspondence on cataloging electronic mailing lists such as RDA-L, OCLC-CAT, and PCCLIST.<sup>23</sup> Frequently the controversies center on whether RDA represents too much or too little change. The tradition of questioning the value of cataloging rules goes back to the parliamentary commission that heard testimony regarding the delays in developing the book catalog at the British Museum, due to the detail required by Sir Anthony Panizzi's "Rules for the Compilation of the Catalogue" in 1841.<sup>24</sup> While the issues were contentious at the time, in the end Panizzi's rules served as the foundation for future cataloging codes. The implementation of RDA could prove to be a similar watershed moment.

23. To see messages in these electronic mailing lists' archives, visit <http://www.mail-archive.com/rda-l@listserv.lac-bac.gc.ca/>, <http://listserv.oclc.org/archives/oclc-cat.html>, and <http://sun8.loc.gov/listarch/pcclist.html>.

24. Anthony Panizzi, et al., "Rules for the Compilation of the Catalogue," *Catalogue of Printed Books in the British Museum* (London: British Museum, printed by order of the Trustees, 1841), 1:v-ix (only vol. 1 published).

## ABSTRACT

*Resource Description & Access* (RDA) developed over a six-year period as a replacement to the *Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules*, 2d edition, 2002 revision (AACR2). The new code, while rooted in the Anglo-American cataloging traditions, uses international standards developed by the International Federation of Library Associations as the basis of its organization. Because RDA focuses solely on content, encoding and display considerations are governed by other standards, such as MARC21 and ISBD. Implementation of RDA offers an opportunity to consider new approaches to end-user search and display options. In addition, RDA data, while functioning in our current environment, will enable the library profession to make bibliographic and authority data more broadly available on the Semantic Web. Many AACR2 rules migrated to RDA, but they now appear in a different context and organization. The new code includes fewer case-based rules, but some specialized instructions remain for music materials. Changes from AACR2 range from the cosmetic to the substantial; some highlights for music include consistent use of the term “score” for notated music not in part-format, and a new way of consistently naming librettos. Although officially published, RDA is not considered static. The Music Library Association has recently submitted several rule change proposals, with more under consideration. The Library of Congress has announced that it will implement RDA no earlier than January 2013. MLA’s Bibliographic Control Committee remains committed to improving RDA to support music resource discovery.

