Comments on „RDA – Resource Description and Access" - Part A, Review of March 2007, Revised Draft of Chapter 3

A revised draft of "RDA – Resource Description and Access", Part A, chapter 3 was made available by the Joint Steering Committee among the JSC working documents in March 2007 **http://www.collectionscanada.ca/jsc/docs/5rda-parta-ch3rev.pdf**. The JSC invited to comment the revised draft by July 16th 2007.

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek appreciates this opportunity and thanks for sharing the draft of the revised chapter 3 publicly world wide. We would like to accept this offer.
The expert groups of the Committee for Library Standards participated in commenting the draft of RDA Part A, revised chapter 3. Their comments are included. Comments which applied to the former draft of chapter 3 are repeated if still relevant for the new draft.

GENERAL ISSUES

We welcome the renaming of Chapter 3 (Carrier) and Chapter 4 (Content).

As already noted in former comments, the existence of options and alternatives in the RDA does call for application rules. In our opinion, the goal should be international application rules. If several differing national applications come into existence, the overall goal of international data exchange will not be met easily.

Alignment with ISBD

We attach importance to a congruence of ISBD and RDA rules and terminology. The upcoming "ISBD consolidated edition" and the RDA draft should be aligned.

Alignment with FRBR

We welcome the alignment of the structure of chapter 3 and 4 with the corresponding FRBR attributes of the manifestation respectively work and expression. We agree on the intended transfer of instructions on recording information relating to mode of access to chapter 5 (Terms of availability) and of instructions on recording information relating to accompanying material and instructions on making notes on other formats to chapter 7 (Related resources).

Representation of elements vs. notes

We welcome JSC's decision to make a distinction between recording information relating to an element in a structured or an unstructured form because we think that the structured information will be helpful for coding this information and retrieving it. (Please also see "Use of coded values").

Use of prescribed terms and terms in lists

We notice that a lot of closed or open lists used in chapter 3 underlie fast changes and require regular updating. We recommend that the updating of these lists should be easy and fast which should be practicable as RDA will be usable as a web product. Even if the lists are updated regularly, regular updates of the exchange and metadata formats applied will be necessary as well. New terms should be marked as "new" including the date when they where added. We also suggest to include more definitions on the terms used in the lists, e.g. media, data file.

Use of coded values

Although the background information explains that the General Introduction will provide clear guidance that the use of equivalent coded values instead of prescribed terms is a question of how the data is stored, not what data is recorded, and, as such, is a matter outside the scope of RDA, we are not yet convinced of this approach. Concerning international data exchange, translations of terms in different kind of languages should be accounted. Unambiguity is important for data transfer and a code and a definition might help to bring different language terms together. Local systems should be expected to resolve a code into an intelligible term.

Punctuation within elements

The cases of category 1 deal with the punctuation within an element in an optical or describing view, as covered by the ISBD. The cases of category 2 would have an impact on the formats. At the time being, we do not see a need for further separation within elements into sub-elements.

Use of abbreviations

We agree to the decision to use abbreviations only in limited cases, e.g. for units of measurement or units of time or when abbreviations appear in the resource described itself.

Examples

We welcome giving examples from the library, archive and museum communities.

MARC mapping

We appreciate the first mapping of RDA data elements to MARC data elements and the mapping of MARC data elements to RDA data elements which are part of the draft. We welcome the announcement of a next mapping from RDA data elements to MARC data elements for summer of 2007. Certainly further additions are necessary to incorporate the terms mentioned in Chapter 3.2., 3.3. and 4.2.

SPECIFIC ELEMENTS

Media type, Carrier type, and Content type

We acknowledge JSC's approach to build on a RDA/ONIX framework. Defining types and genres has been and still is a matter that moves many communities and with regard to shareable data it brings advantages to have a common basis.

The RDA/ONIX approach is built on a logical segmentation into separate terms. The combination of terms gives the overall picture of a resource.

We had an interesting discussion which sections of chapter 3 and 4 work as successors of the former general material designation (GMD). Our opinion is that both sections 3.2 and 4.2 include successor rules on GMD. Will the successor terms be harmonized with the former GMDs? 3.2 is optional, and following ISBD the GMD is an optional element directly following the title proper, whereas the draft of the Statement of International Cataloguing Principles includes GMD as an indispensable access point.

The descriptive cataloguing code "RAK-WB" [Regeln für die alphabetische Katalogisierung in wissenschaftlichen Bibliotheken / Rules for the descriptive cataloguing in scientific libraries] which is used in Germany and Austria includes publication types like "thesis" in a note or "teacher's edition" in the edition area of the bibliographic description. The subject cataloguing code RSWK [Regeln für den Schlagwortkatalog / Rules for the subject catalogue] encompasses subjects dealing with the form. We welcome term lists and codes which work in both, the descriptive and subject field.

Referring to the definition given in the glossary of the term "digital" as media used to store electronic files, designed for use with a computer, we agree to replace the term "digital" by "computer" in 3.2 (Media type) and 3.3 (Carrier type). Yet, we note that not every digital resource needs a computer as a viewing device. That means that the renaming in 3.2 is rectified, whereas the renaming in 3.3 might be questioned. We note that other sections, e.g. 3.20 (Digital file characteristics) also contain the term "digital".

We see that the term "book" as a carrier type term might be confusing and has therefore been replaced by the term "volume" which is accompanied by a definition, but we think that "volume" might as well carry other connotations, e.g. a volume of a serial.
We discussed a proposal "bound volume" which was not convincing because it would exlude loose-leafs. So we are not able to come up with another proposal instead of "book" or "volume". The question if the term "book" or "volume" is an appropriate term, belonging to the collective term "unmediated", is a hint that one of the most important carrier types, "paper", is still missing among the carrier type list.

Regarding the need to signal mode of issuance, we welcome the decision for further discussion as we consider this information important.

Appendix 1: Examples of carrier description

Examples E (Cartographic resource: Globe) and F (Cartographic resource: Map) include "unmediated" as the carrier type according to 3.3.0.2, but "unmediated" as such is not included in 3.3.0.2.
According to 3.3.0.2.3, we would have expected "other unmediated carrier".

Example G (Dual disc; audio CD on one side and video DVD on the other side) is an example where two elements would be necessary in MARC field 008. Will 008 in the future allow to list as many terms as apply?

The examples illustrate that the information "unmediated" is unqualified for a structured search or presentation (see also comments on 3.2 media type).

CHAPTER 3 CARRIER

We notice that MIME-Types are mentioned in chapter 3.

3.1. General guidelines on describing carriers
3.1.1. Sources of information

It is suggested to take additional evidence from any source, if desired. We think that this gives a wide range where to take information from. The rules in the International Standard Bibliographic Descriptions (ISBDs) are very traditional compared to this, prescribing square brackets. The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek welcomes the more open approach. Nevertheless, opinions on the value of square brackets are heterogeneous in the expert groups. The meaning and intent of expressing a quality of information by square bracketing is well-known to librarians, but not understood in other communities. A square bracket does not tell where the information is from. An information that the source is not the main source prescribed for a certain element may not be as valuable as in the past when now the access to digitized materials allows immediate proof.

Anyway, a harmonization betweeen RDA and ISBD is urgent.

3.1.2. Manifestations available in different formats

It might be deduced from the rule text that according to FRBR each manifestation receives a data record, but it is not explicitly stated here. Will RDA include such a clear position anywhere?

CONSER introduced the aggregator-neutral records in 2003 where multiple manifestions are covered by a single record. We wonder if CONSER will change this practice.

3.1.3. Facsimiles and reproductions

We support the rule to describe a facsimile or reproduction by recording the elements describing the carrier as they apply to the facsimile or reproduction, not the original. This is analogous to FRBR and helps to identify the manifestation.

3.1.6. Change in carrier characteristics

The rule describes how changes in carrier characteristics are recorded. Which change in a carrier calls for a new data record?

3.2. Media type

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek agrees with the Library of Congress that this optional element could be eliminated from RDA. LC argued that the vast grouping of incredibly disparate resources into a single "unmediated" category would make it relatively useless as a search filter or limiting tool, and not helpful from a user "selection" perspective either. In times of fast changes in the technical environment it is not possible to outline every difference in audio, video and computer, e.g. digital television.

As we already noted in the last comment on chapter 3, "unmediated" seems to be a very collective term. "Unmediated" or "other" does not convey any meaningful information.

Our expert group members regard the superordinate element "media type" as a valuable retrieval label information, but conceded that this information could as well be derived from 3.3 (carrier type).

The list in 3.2 is a mixture of adjectives and substantives. Is the difference intended and the addition "carrier" co-imagined?

3.3. Carrier type

In our opinion, the use of a list of carrier type(s) needs regular updating. There are so many changes and technical innovations especially in the fields of computer, audio and video going on that these lists have to be updated frequently.

3.3.0.2. Recording carrier type
3.3.0.2.2. Alternative

The base rule in 3.3.0.2.1 asks for recording as many terms for the type(s) of carrier as applicable to the resource described. The alternative rule in 3.3.0.2.2. includes two ways, either to record only the carrier type that applies to the predominant part of the resource or to record the carrier types that apply to the most substantial parts of the resource, if the resource consists of more than one carrier type.

We advocate for using the basic rule because the alternative of recording the carrier types that apply to the most substantial parts of the resource seems to be a very subjective decision.

3.4. Extent

We notice affirmatively that the structure of this section has been improved significantly to the last draft.

"Extent" is a required element. In a lot of cases the detailed partition might be very useful, but generally the informations are very detailed for a required element. Now and then "if applicable" appears in the draft text. What exactly does "if applicable" mean?

3.4.1.1. Recording extent of a cartographic resource

We recommend to give explanations on the terms used in the list under 3.4.1.1.1. Right now we use very detailed data and would like to know where they fit in, e.g. aerial view, panorama, relief, satellite picture, bird's-eye view.

3.4.2.1. Score and parts

We suggest to add definitions to the glossary for "score", "condensed score", "close score".

3.4.2.2. Other notated music formats

We suggest to add definitions to the glossary for "choir book" and "table book".

3.4.3. Extent of still image

We would like to see definitions for "activity card", "painting", "photograph" and "picture" in the glossary.

3.4.4. Extent of text

There is very detailed information on how to record the number of pages. Is this still up to date? We see the necessity from the user side to identify specific resources via the amount of pages but the cost-benefit factor should be considered, too.

3.5. Dimensions
3.5.0.4. Dimensions of carrier

We welcome the decision that metric systems are asked for in the general rule and that other systems may be used according to the alternative rule as we suggested in a former comment.

3.6. Base material

We wonder where the information could be included that a resource is printed on acid-free paper. It was suggested by JSC's answer to our former comments on RDA drafts to record that kind of information as a note on the base material but what about other information concerning long-term preservation, e.g. information about formats and system environments, about the technical history of the file, the creator software and the viewer software etc.? It is not sufficient to record this information only locally. In a growing digital environment this kind of information is getting more and more important for users and libraries as well because it is essential for long-term archiving processes. We are afraid that "burying" this information in notes might not suffice.

3.12. Colour

We think that it should be defined for what kind of resources the colour has to be recorded. The suggested data are not sufficient enough to describe an image. We suggest to include information on the technical description of colours in digital resources.

3.16 Reduction ratio

This section does not have the same detailedness as other sections. According to 3.16.0.1.2 (Scope), it is possible to record a zoom factor.

3.17. Sound characteristics

When we saw the recording of playing speed under 3.17.0.5. we thought about where to record the performance time. We found this information in 4.12.0.4. (Performance time) and suggest to add a reference from 3.17.0.5 to 4.12.0.4. We comprehend the distinction of recording the playing speed in chapter 3 (Carrier) as it is something to deal with the carrier itself and of recording the performance time in chapter 4 (Content).

3.17.0.5. Playing speed

We suggest the following examples:

78 rpm *(rpm of a shellac disc)*
33 1/3 rpm (side A), 45 1/3 rpm (side B) *(different rpms on each side)*

3.17.0.9 Configuration of playback channels

We suggest to add an example "stereo predominant".

3.17.1.3 Details of sound characteristics

We suggest to add "digitally remastered", "remastered", "AAD", "ADD", "DDD".

3.20. Digital file characteristics

Data concerning the rights of a digital resource (e.g. copyright, right of use, exploitation rights) are not included here. Will this be included in chapter 5 and will chapter 5 be pre-published in a revised version so that constituencies may see the changes made?
An example "Not copy-protected" is given under 3.20.1.3. (Details of digital file characteristics). We think that it is not useful to record the rights of a digital resource only in a note.

3.20.0.4. File type

We would prefer definitions on the terms listed under file types, e.g. "data file" vs. "program file" and suggest to add them to the glossary.

3.20.0.5. Encoding format

Why is it necessary to differentiate between the formats? XML is mentioned as a data encoding format but it is also a text encoding format and should be added there, too. We suggest to include the format TeX to the terms of text encoding formats and the format PNG to the terms of image encoding formats. We notice that 3.20.0.5.2 allows to record further formats because the list in 3.20.0.5.1 includes only a choice of formats in the market.

We think that the differentiation between "carrier" and "content" is difficult in both cases (3.20.0.4. and 3.20.0.5).

3.20.0.7. Transmission speed

The transmission speed of data exchange is not only an attribute of the carrier. It's more depending on the performance of the user area/techniqual equipment.

3.22. Notes on equipment and system requirements

We appreciate the alternative to use the unstructured form.

3.23. Notes on item-specific carrier characteristics
3.23.1. Item-specific carrier characteristics of early printed resources

We suggest to add "provenance" to the rule text or to add a reference if "provenance" is covered now by chapter 7 (it was mentioned in the 2006 draft of chapter 6.3).

CHAPTER 4 CONTENT

We notice the changed structure of the table of content. It is very good to see the grouping into the two FRBR sections attributes of the work and attributes of the expression.

4.2. Content type

We welcome that content type is now labelled a required element as we suggested last year, analogically to 3.3. (Carrier type).

GLOSSARY

We notice that some definitions in the former draft which were either part of the "scope" text or given in a footnote have now vanished. We suggest to compile all the definitions – whether already given in a scope section or not – in the glossary.

We suggest to add a definition on the term "media" in the glossary as it seems to be used in a special meaning in chapter 3. We suggest to add definitions for the following terms:

- activity card
- chart
- choir book
- close score
- condensed score
- data file
- early printed resources (we know that an undebated exact time range does not exist, but suggest to give 1830 as a time limit (end of manual printing and emergence of automatic procedures))
- media
- painting
- photograph
- picture
- program file
- score
- table book