

To: Joint Steering Committee for Development of RDA  
From: John Attig, ALA Representative  
Subject: RDA Vocabularies: Miscellaneous Issues

This is a compendium of issues relating to the RDA vocabularies in the Open Metadata Registry (OMR). Most of them have been raised before, and some of them have been resolved.

I will begin with a set of issues relating to the Extent of ... vocabularies that I raised in May 2011 [6JSC/ALA Rep/3 and responses].

1. **Singular and plural terms.** This has been discussed several times, both by the JSC and by Metadata Management Associates (MMA). The consensus seems to be that the RDA vocabularies should include only one version (usually, the singular) and that linguistic variants such as plurals should be treated as special classes of labels. SKOS does support such labels, although this functionality has not yet been implemented in OMR. Unless there is disagreement, I will delete the plural versions of terms that already exist in the vocabularies.
2. **Duplicate or implied vocabularies.** This issue was raised in conjunction with the basic instructions for the Extent element, which call for use of terms from the Carrier Type vocabulary. A decision was made to add this vocabulary to the Registry, even though it duplicates the Carrier Type vocabulary. This has been done, and the vocabulary has been published. There are some remaining cases that have not yet been resolved; for example, the instructions for recording the Mount element call for use of terms from the Base Materials vocabulary. Discussions on how to deal with this situation without duplicating the entire vocabulary did not reach a consensus. For the moment, there is no Mount vocabulary in OMR. Another case involves the vocabulary which appears both for the Layout element (3.11.1.3) and the Layout of Tactile Text element (3.11.4.3); these vocabularies have not yet been published. A final case of an overlapping or duplicated vocabulary is that for Extent of Notated Music (3.4.3) and Format of Notated Music (7.20); there was not consensus as to whether this latter vocabulary should be explicitly added to 3.4.3.
3. **Fragments of extent statements.** The instructions for recording Extent of Text specifies a number of words or phrases that are to be included in an extent statement, but are only fragments of such statements: *approximately*, *folded*, *incomplete*, *unnumbered*. In some cases, compound terms can be defined: *folded leaves*, *unnumbered pages*, etc. This is not really possible with *approximately* or *incomplete*. There seemed to be a consensus that compound terms could be defined when possible, but that fragments of statements such as *approximately* should not be included in the Registry. Note that this occurs in other cases, such as Production method for manuscript. A different case involves statements that contain a variable

term, e.g., [*name of instrument*] *accompaniment*. There does not seem to be a reasonable way of defining such statements in the Registry.

In addition to these issues relating to Extent, the following issues have also been raised. These are given in no particular order.

4. **Groups of Books of the Bible.** The JSC decided that these should not be treated as a vocabulary. I will be deleting them from the Registry.
5. **Single or multiple vocabularies.** The vocabularies for Extent and for Medium of Performance raise questions about whether these were intended to be single or multiple vocabularies. In the case of Extent, RDA includes a section of Basic Instructions, followed by sections for Extent of Cartographic Resource, Extent of Notated Music, Extent of Still Image, Extent of Text, Extent of Three-Dimensional Form; each of these sections includes a vocabulary (either explicitly defined or implied). The question is whether the vocabularies for these element sub-types should be considered as separate vocabularies, or whether these instructions should be considered as sets of instructions applying to parts of a single vocabulary.

In the case of Medium of Performance, the question is made more complicated by the fact that there is no general vocabulary for this element; there are only lists of terms for particular situations such as solo voices or groups of instruments. The sum of these lists does not constitute a complete vocabulary. We seem to be moving towards the use of a (not yet developed) external vocabulary for Medium of Performance. Does this mean that we should not act on the existing Medium terms – or perhaps even delete them from the Registry? If they are retained, should we treat them collectively as a single (but incomplete) vocabulary or as separate vocabularies?

6. **“Top concepts.”** Several vocabularies (e.g., Carrier Type, Encoding Format, Extent) include subheadings that group related terms into sub-categories of the element. These have been treated as “top concepts” in the Registry and are given as broader term references for the individual terms. However, these broader terms are not themselves valid concepts in the vocabulary. Thus far, I have not published any of these terms. Given that they are not valid concepts, I question whether they should be included. On the other hand, they do provide some useful hierarchical context for some rather extensive vocabularies.
7. **Digital representation of cartographic content.** In our discussion of this vocabulary, one issue has not yet been considered. The term *point* appears in both the Date Type and the Object Type vocabularies. This suggests that the two are distinct concepts and need to be registered separately.
8. **“Selections” as Other distinguishing characteristic of an expression.** Should we register this term. If so, is the vocabulary Other Distinguishing Characteristic of an Expression (6.12) or Selected Parts or Excerpts (6.12.1.4)?

- 9. Variant Access Point Representing One or More Librettos or Other Texts for Musical Works.** Should the list of terms to be used in such variant access points be considered a vocabulary? The list currently includes *Libretto*, *Librettos*, *Text*, and *Texts*; and ALA has proposed to add *Lyrics*.
- 10. Groove Characteristics.** Before publishing the terms for Groove Characteristics, I raised the question whether these should be a single vocabulary or separate vocabularies for Groove Pitch and Groove Width. The responses seemed to favor separate vocabularies. May we consider that a decision?