

TO: Joint Steering Committee for Development of RDA

FROM: Alan Danskin, British Library representative to JSC

SUBJECT: Discussion paper: First issue v. latest (current) issue.
British Library Response

The British Library welcomes this thorough review of the issues and thanks DNB and the Task Force for undertaking this work.

We do not agree with the statement on page 10 that, "The "first issue" approach also does not fit well with the principle of representation as stated in RDA 0.4.3.4". Any individual issue is a "snapshot" of the resource.

We do not think there is any merit in debating which approach is superior, first issue or current issue. This has been discussed many times, without any consensus emerging. Either approach has advantages and disadvantages, as set out in the report. Institutions are already committed to one approach or the other and to change policy would, as the paper acknowledges, be both costly and difficult to justify.

We recognise that there is an urgent requirement for a solution prior to German implementation. We therefore agree that both approaches will co-exist in the short to medium term.

We agree that an explicit indication of which method is followed would be a useful addition to the schema and should be included in any discussion JSC has regarding data about data.

Comments on the draft proposal

Cataloguers and trainers have expressed concern regarding the proliferation of alternative instructions in RDA. If this approach is followed, it would be desirable to investigate mitigating strategies in the Toolkit, e.g. offering specific views of the instructions based on agency preference.

If this approach is followed, the current instructions should be retained and the latest issue instructions inserted as alternatives.

Comments on the new design

We agree that a redesign would be desirable. Such a redesign has to take into account the potential for linking as well as defining attributes.

EURIG members discussed this paper at the meeting on 19th September.

The meeting accepted the principle that RDA should not prefer one approach over another. The meeting was not generally in favour of multiplying the number of exceptions.

A three point approach was suggested, based on the recommendations in the paper.

- 1) Define a new sub-element for elements in which the content may vary over time. The purpose of the new sub-element is to record terms that indicate whether the content of the element reflects the current, earliest or an intermediate source.
- 2) Define a metadata element that records whether the description is based on current or earliest source.
- 3) Generalise RDA instructions to remove any specific bias towards either current or earliest source.