

RDA IN EUROPE

REPORT OF THE WORK IN PROGRESS IN FRANCE

PROPOSAL FOR AN EURIG TECHNICAL MEETING IN PARIS

August 2011

During the RDA European Interest Group meeting held at Copenhagen in August 2010, BnF presented the state of the art of RDA in France: "French libraries moving to RDA? Key issues"¹. In this presentation we described technical and strategic issues we have to face, and how we planned to pave the way for decision. One year later, this note aims at introducing our conclusions on the in-depth examination of the rules we made until December 2010, in a country without any AACR2 tradition. What the current situation is now? What our planning is for the next months? In what the French approach is in accordance or not with the current position of the European countries?

1. French organisation adopted to think about a possible adoption of RDA in France

The study is made in the framework of the national organisation for standardisation (AFNOR = Association française de normalisation) which is responsible of the French national cataloguing rules. A technical and a strategic Working Groups were defined with different responsibilities.

The Technical Working Group, which is the AFNOR Working Group CG46/CN357/GE6 "Evolution of bibliographic description", is chaired by Françoise Leresche and has 5 directions of work:

1. in-depth examination of the rules in order to define what could be a French profile of RDA and to give options and recommendations for the implementation of RDA ;
2. translation of RDA into French, in collaboration with Canada and other French speaking countries ;
3. evaluation of the impacts of RDA on library systems, on catalogue consistency, on bibliographic records exchange in order to help French libraries on cost planning ;
4. information and training ;
5. schedule of possible implementation.

The work started in September 2010 and submitted a first set of proposals to the Strategic Working Group in February 2011.

The Strategic Working Group is chaired by the Agence Bibliographique de l'Enseignement Supérieur (ABES)² directed by Raymond Bérard. Members of this WG are from AFNOR, ministries responsible for libraries, bibliographic agencies, major libraries, library schools, library associations, and consultants. Its goals are:

1. reaching the decision whether to adopt RDA in France ;
2. looking into technical and economic impacts (feasibility, cost implications) ;
3. ensuring that the French approach is taken into account in the future evolution of RDA ;
4. defining a schedule for the implementation enabling the migration of legacy records.

This Working Group met on 25 March 2011, to examine the proposals made by the technical Working Group and to give directions for the future work.

¹ <http://www.slainte.org.uk/eurig/docs/RDA2010/LerescheEURIG2010.pps>

² ABES in charge of SUDOC (Système Universitaire de documentation), the Library Union Catalogue for the academic, specialist and Higher Education in France.

2. Findings of the Technical group

2.1 Findings on the rules

As a first step, the core work of the Technical Group was to analyse and to evaluate the RDA rules. This work is not completely achieved. Some aspects have to be examined in more details through examples. Nevertheless it was reported to the Strategic Group that:

- In spite of a renovated arrangement of contents that has been inspired by the FRBR and FRAD models as well as by the *International cataloguing principles*, RDA remains in fact very faithful to the AACR. One can indeed note a great continuity with the AACR. Though RDA was developed with the goal of being used in an international context³, it *reflects* an Anglo-American conception of information handling and leaves but little place for international reference documents.
 - **ISO standards** are almost totally ignored (only ISO 15924 « *Codes for the representation of names of scripts* » is explicitly referred to) and one may note, too, a **lack of reference to IFLA documents**, such as *Names of persons* for defining the preferred form of a name of person or *Anonymous classics* for the choice of the preferred title of an anonymous work.
 - **Particular treatments** are provided for the Anglo-American countries that devised the AACR and then RDA and are supposed to be the first users of the latter (for instance, the structure of geographical names with a greater precision for these countries, or the treatment of noble titles) ... when foreign realities are not totally ignored!
 - Lastly, rules may express a **different culture**: it is the case in particular for legal works or else for audiovisual resources, for which the divergence between the French and American practices is obvious (place of performers, role of the producer... but also physical description of carriers).

This is therefore **a limit to the international ambitions** of the cataloguing code.

- One may also affirm that RDA proposes **ONE particular interpretation of the FRBR model**. It seems indeed to have used the FRBR model in a certain sense, in order to provide an easy transition from the AACR and thus allow continuity with the existing records. This leads thus to choices in the interpretation of the conceptual model, and even to distortions in relation to the latter, and sometimes to incoherence in the chosen solutions. For instance, why should the Title of the Expression be defined from the Title of the Work only and the linguistic variants be given on the level of the Work... while the language is associated with the Expression?
- This is increased by the fact that RDA, out of concern for simplicity (and clarity?), **distributes** bibliographical information **arbitrarily and univocally** between the various entities of the FRBR model. In RDA an element of information may thus be associated with only one entity of the FRBR model, while, depending on the cases and the reality of the documents to describe, some of these elements should be allowed to describe more than one entity.

For example :

for cartographic resources, the scale is defined as an attribute of the entity Expression. But, in most cases, it should be associated with the Work (the original scale corresponding to the conception and creation of the map), but because some editions may be scale enlargements or reductions, the scale should be also allowed at the Expression level (any modification of the original scale might be presented as a characteristics of an edition).

³ RDA § 0.11.1: “RDA is designed for use in an international context.”

Otherwise, RDA does **not allow to describe accurately some types of resources**, either because the way the FRBR model is used (see above) did not allow to take into account some distinctive characteristics of the resources (it is the case for the serials), either because these resources were superficially treated, with rough rules and an obvious lack of examples (notably this is the case of the cartographic resources and still images). So,

- *for serials*, RDA does not allow to describe accurately the local editions of a newspaper ;
- *for cartographic resources*, cartographic series (monographic multipart resources) are not approached ; the distribution of some essential data elements such as geographical coordinates, scale or projection between the entities of the FRBR model is questionable ; no distinction exists between the transcribed information (for example the scale mentioned as an attribute of the Manifestation) and the standardised information (attribute of the Work or of the Expression) ; no precise instruction and no example to indicate how some attributes have to be registered : is the form of the Work referred to a general typology (map) or to an accurate one (topographical map, road map, etc ?)
- *for still images*, obviously the analysis was not conducted in a precise manner and we have not a coherent analysis grid: the line between Expression of the same Work and creation of a new Work is not obvious (is the photographic reproduction of a painting a new Work or is one of the Expressions of the Work of the painter ?); here again it is not possible to know how to register the form of the Work; the technique appears only at the level of the Manifestation, while the use of new techniques allow to distinguish between some states, so between some Expressions...

2.2. Remarks on the RDA Toolkit

RDA Toolkit does not seem exploitable by French cataloguers as it is, and the availability of a French translation will not be sufficient to solve the difficulties. Its ergonomics should be improved, but in particular, the way it is organized supposes to be familiar with the FRBR and FRAD models and their interpretation by RDA. Even except the definition of a French profile, it will be necessary to draft an application guide - as RDA Toolkit contains a help to cross from AACR in RDA.

2.3. Evolution of the bibliographic formats and of the structure of the catalogues.

The scenario 1 is those corresponding to the FRBRization of catalogues and which favors the passage of the bibliographical data on the Web. It is scenario 1 which makes the interest of RDA for the French libraries. If the American libraries do not retain the scenario 1, what will be the French position? If France adopts a position different from those of the United States, it will be necessary to study the impacts of this decision at the level of the dissemination and downloading of the data, the interoperability and the evolutions of ILS.

At the same time it examined the rules, the Technical Group kept in mind the issues related to the evolution of formats and of the structure of the catalogues. One of the objectives of this work is to prepare the MARC formats, especially UNIMARC in France, to express the bibliographic information according to the structure defined in the FRBR model. This work was done by the French Committee for UNIMARC (CfU⁴), within which many experts of the Technical Group are present, because the CfU was asked by the Permanent Unimarc Committee of IFLA (PUC) for preparing proposals on **how the format should be developed to express the FRBR model in UNIMARC**. The results of this work is presented by the chair of the CfU, Philippe Le Pape, in a paper at IFLA 2011⁵

⁴ CfU : Comité français UNIMARC -

⁵ Philippe Le Pape. *Expressing FRBR in Unimarc ? Yes we can!*

<http://conference.ifla.org/sites/default/files/files/papers/ifla77/187-pape-en.pdf>

2.3 Meetings with the software vendors

Finally, the Technical group, jointly with the CfU and the FULBI⁶ organised a first meeting with the **software vendors** in order to make them aware of the possible arrival of RDA in France, and more globally, of the evolution of the structure of the catalogues to comply with the FRBR model. A great number of vendors replied to this invitation, especially those responsible for the equipment of big and medium libraries. Vendors who recognized the relevance and the contribution of the FRBR model in the data processing expressed great expectations. Notably, they asked for very detailed specifications in order to prepare coherent developments.

A second meeting was scheduled in June to update the information to the vendors and confirm the French choice to prepare FRBRization of the main catalogues (what ever be the French decision on RDA).

3. Possible options defined by the Technical Group

Five options were presented by the Technical Group to the Strategic Group. They formed the basis for determining the French orientations.

1st option: adopt RDA as such. This option is not recommended by the Technical Group;

2nd option: define a French profile of RDA;

3rd option: draft a French cataloguing code built on the FRBR and FRAD models;

4th option: looking to the new Italian cataloging code REICAT;

5th option: wait

Whatever is the chosen option, the implementation of the FRBR model in the catalogues stands out as a necessity, to adapt them to the current context and allow the data that they contain to be present on the Web. This report must be however qualified, according to the size and the missions of institutions, as well as their participation or not to a network.

In addition, the Technical Group raised two important issues:

- The implementation of the FRBR model in the catalogues has for consequence the multiplication of records, in particular by the systematic creation of records for the Works and, if necessary, for the Expressions. How to share out the work in order to avoid the French libraries to be overloaded? Thanks to the constitution of a national data pool, or by the exposure of the data on the Semantic Web and their recovery according to the principle of the Linked Open Data (LOD)?

- The major part of French libraries are willing to copy catalogue from the bibliographic agencies (BnF, and ABES for academic libraries) or from commercial providers. What happens if the different data providers have made different ways to implement the FRBR model? Is it important to have a (national or even international?) consensus between all these data providers about the data model? If not, what are the consequences for the interoperability and the data sharing?

4. Orientations given by the Strategic Group

The discussion focussed on the following:

4.1 French point of view on the scenarios of RDA implementation

RDA defines three scenarios of implementation to manage the transition towards the FRBRisation of catalogues:

- Scenario 1 is respectful of the FRBR structure.

- Scenarios 2 and 3 are close to the current model of data.

Scenario 3 is even a regression with regard to the majority of the current French catalogues because it plans no links between bibliographic and authority records.

⁶ FULBI : Fédération des utilisateurs de logiciels pour Bibliothèques, Information et Documentation : Federation of users of softwares devoted to Libraries, Information and Documentation.

The scenario 2 constitutes a rickety approach. For software publishers, it introduces a source of uncertainty on the wished structure of data.

4.2 FRBRisation of catalogues and RDA: do we need RDA?

The main objective is the application of the model FRBR in library catalogs, to allow them to go more easily on Web, in particular on the Web of data. To achieve this, it will eventually be necessary to create bibliographic data according to the structure of the FRBR model, and thus to have cataloguing rules built from this model. Today RDA presents the most accomplished version of this approach and it is what makes it valuable. But RDA is only one of the possible options. Italy also elaborated a new cataloguing code FRBR based: REICAT (*Regole Italiane di Catalogazione*) published in 2009⁷.

4.3 What consequences on the copy cataloguing?

In the practice, discrepancies between cataloguing rules do not prevent the exchange of records. For example, OCLC integrates in WorldCat French records, established according to the AFNOR standards, while it is at first a North American union catalogue.

Local catalogues are integrators as they take descriptions from various sources (for continuing resources, for educational resources, and various electronic resources). In the practice, downloading records from North American catalogues is not really cost saving, because it imposes manual interventions to adapt the records to the French context (preferred access points, language of the notes, etc.). Will it be the same if we move towards RDA?

What will be the contribution of RDA for the future users, which benefit they will have at the local level?

4.4 Recommendations of the Strategic Group

In conclusion of this meeting, the Strategic Group asks the Technical Group for:

- studying thoroughly Option 5, renamed « Prepare the future » by keeping as an objective to join Option 1 (« Adopt RDA as it is»), and **considering the possibility of a European profile of RDA scenario 1**;
- continuing the analysis of the RDA implementation in France and estimating its consequences in terms of
 - Cost
 - Evolution of the ILS for an implementation of the FRBR model (scenario 1 of RDA) in catalogues
 - Legacy records
 - Training

5. Where are we today?⁸

5.1 Technical Group continues its work on the following issues:

Several Technical Sub-groups have been created, all of which have not yet begun their work.

- description of the Manifestations, based first on consolidated ISBD, but aiming to be RDA compatible as far as possible ;
- training
- data model and evolution of ILS
- FRBRization
- authority data for Works
- authority data for Persons and Families
- authority data for Corporate bodies and Places

⁷See the presentation of the new code during IFLA 2009 in Milan (<http://www.ifla.org/files/hq/papers/ifla75/107-petrucciani-fr.pdf>) and the Seminar organized by ICCU in 2010 : *REICAT: contenuti, applicazione, elementi di confronto* http://www.iccu.sbn.it/opencms/opencms/it/main/attivita/gruppilav_commissioni/pagina_369.html;jsessionid=CFB BECFA2C20D61388C95E52B418BB90)

⁸To keep in touch with the work in progress, you can refer to the web site of the French Technical Group on RDA : <http://rda-en-france.enssib.fr/>

5.2 Moving towards RDA remains an option, but after some evolution of the rules at the international level!

The report of the US RDA Test Coordinating Committee confirms that there is some consensus on the questions raised by RDA today: lack of internationalisation, poor treatment of audiovisual resources and special materials, etc.

The need of evolution for RDA seems commonly recognized, but if RDA evolves, coordination on the change proposals is recommended at the European level in order to make sure that the European cultural specificities are taken into account.

Can we reach a European common way to implement the FRBR model? For example, could we agree on what attributes pertain to the entity Expression: is there or not an agreement with the proposal made by RDA? The French Technical Group contests partially the RDA analysis on this issue, what is the opinion of other EURIG members?

France already sent its remarks to the ISBD Review Group in March 2011. This work is under consideration by the Review Group as a working document for the JSC/ISBD RG /ISSN meeting scheduled in Fall 2011. But, beyond the Manifestation, other issues remain to be discussed: notably the RDA interpretation of the FRBR model, rules on other entities (Persons...), etc.

6. Proposal of a EURIG Technical Meeting late 2011/ early 2012

In order to discuss all the points mentioned above, the BnF would like to invite the representatives of the EURIG members to a technical meeting in Paris late 2011/early 2012.

About 20 participants are expected.

The objectives would be to verify that a common European view of RDA is feasible and, if it is, how to define a European profile and implementation scenario of RDA, and how to report on our expectations to the JSC.

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