

Translating RDA: a Discussion of the Opportunities and Challenges of an International Cataloging Standard

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Translating RDA Reference

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What is RDA Reference?

RDA Reference includes all RDA Elements, their definitions and any related scope notes, and all value vocabulary terms and definitions.

RDA Elements include entities, attributes, and relationships described in RDF. The value vocabularies include the controlled terminologies for RDA data given in the Toolkit instructions, and a controlled terminology used with the instructions in general (RDA Terms).

Source: [RDA Registry](#)

Partial translations vs full translations

- Translating RDA Reference is required as the initial step to translate the RDA Toolkit (full translation)
- RDA Reference and its translations are published as linked data in the

RDA Registry

RDA Registry

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- [Elements \(RDA element sets\)](#)
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RDA element sets

Classes

Classes that represent the RDA entities, including RDA Entity, Work, Expression, Manifestation, Item, Agent, Collective Agent, Person, Family, Corporate Body, Nomen, Place, and Timespan.

Number of elements:	13
Namespace:	http://rdaregistry.info/Elements/c/
Suggested prefix:	rdac
Example curie*:	rdac:C10001

* registered at prefix.cc

Downloads

- [CSV \(text/csv\)](#) (English language only)
- [JSON-LD \(application/json | application/json+ld\)](#)
- [N-Triples \(text/rdf+nt\)](#)
- [RDF/XML \(application/rdf+xml\)](#)

Languages

[Arabic](#) [Catalan](#) [Danish](#) [Dutch](#) [English](#) [Estonian](#) [Finnish](#)
[French](#) [German](#) [Greek](#) [Hungarian](#) [Italian](#) [Norwegian](#)
[Spanish](#) [Swedish](#) [Vietnamese](#)

Partial translations vs full translations

- Less-than-full translations of RDA that cover all or part of RDA Reference are also possible, if the translation is maintained by an RDA user community or individual authorized by ALA Digital Reference

Translation template

- Translations are uploaded into the Staff Registry using CSV files called *translation templates*
- UTF8 encoding supports all scripts
- There used to be one template per element set and vocabulary but the current templates combines them all in one file
- Contains one row for each property related to an element or a vocabulary value
- More than 18300 rows (including deprecated elements and vocabulary values) representing:
 - 3013 elements (deprecated elements not included)
 - 637 vocabulary values (deprecated values not included)
 - Set of unconstrained elements and RDA/ONIX Framework value vocabularies whose translation is optional

Translation template

- There are always 4 properties for each element or vocabulary value, i.e. 2 types of labels and 2 types of definitions (“Registry” and Toolkit)

Elements	Vocabulary values
Labels: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• rdfs:label• rdakit:toolkitLabel Definitions: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• skos:definition• rdakit:toolkitDefinition	Labels: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• skos:prefLabel• rdakit:toolkitLabel Definitions: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• skos:definition• rdakit:toolkitDefinition

- This means a minimum of 14 600 rows for which a translation must be provided

Translation template

- For value vocabularies, the two types of labels and the two types of definitions are identical
- For elements, the label and definition appearing in the RDA Registry are verbalized versions of the RDA Toolkit label and definition
 - The label is a verbal phrase using the pattern "is ..." or "has ..." + toolkitLabel
 - The definition includes the type of entity to which the element applies (the domain), using the template pattern "Relates a [domain entity] to " + toolkitDefinition

"has singer agent"

"Relates an expression to an agent who is a performer who contributes to an expression by using their voice, with or without instrumental accompaniment, to produce music."

Translation template

singer agent

Definition and Scope

An agent who is a performer who contributes to an expression by using their voice, with or without instrumental accompaniment, to produce music.

A performance of a singer may or may not include actual words.

Element Reference

IRI

<http://rdaregistry.info/Elements/e/P20025>

Domain

Expression →

Range

Agent →

Alternate labels

has singer agent

singer

The “Registry label” for elements is given as an alternate label in the Element Reference section of element pages

Translation template

- Some elements and vocabulary values have one or two additional elements:
 - `skos:scopeNote`, for a scope note
 - `skos:altLabel`, for synonyms (including labels from original Toolkit when they have been modified during the 3R Projetc)

Example of properties for a vocabulary value (with synonym)

skos:prefLabel	multiple unit	unités multiples
rdakit:toolkitLabel	multiple unit	unités multiples
skos:definition	A mode of issuance of a manifestation that is issued as a multipart physical unit or intangible multipart logical unit.	Mode de parution d'une manifestation qui est publiée en multiples unités physiques ou en multiples unités logiques immatérielles.
rdakit:toolkitDefinition	A mode of issuance of a manifestation that is issued as a multipart physical unit or intangible multipart logical unit.	Mode de parution d'une manifestation qui est publiée en multiples unités physiques ou en multiples unités logiques immatérielles.
skos:altLabel	multipart monograph	

Note: Not all columns in the template are included

Example of properties for an element (with scope note)

rdfs:label	has singer agent	a pour agent chanteur
skos:definition	Relates an expression to an agent who is a performer who contributes to an expression by using their voice, with or without instrumental accompaniment, to produce music.	Met une expression en relation avec un agent interprète qui contribue à une expression en utilisant sa voix, avec ou sans accompagnement instrumental, pour produire de la musique.
skos:scopeNote	A performance of a singer may or may not include actual words.	Une prestation d'un chanteur peut inclure ou non des paroles.
rdakit:toolkitLabel	singer agent	agent chanteur
rdakit:toolkitDefinition	An agent who is a performer who contributes to an expression by using their voice, with or without instrumental accompaniment, to produce music.	Agent interprète qui contribue à une expression en utilisant sa voix, avec ou sans accompagnement instrumental, pour produire de la musique.
skos:altLabel	singer	chanteur

Note: Not all columns in the template are included

Adding a translation

Column3	Column4	Column5	Column6	Column7
property	original_en	modified_en	translation_original_fr	translation_new_fr
skos:prefLabel	dataset	dataset		
rdakit:toolkitDefinition	A category of linked data work that is an aggregation of metadata description sets that describe two or more instances of one or more entities.	A category of linked data work that is an aggregation of metadata description sets that describe two or more instances of one or more entities.		
rdakit:toolkitLabel	dataset	dataset		
rdakit:toolkitLabel	value vocabulary	value vocabulary		
rdakit:toolkitDefinition	A category of linked data work that contains concepts that are used as values for properties in a dataset.	A category of linked data work that contains concepts that are used as values for properties in a dataset.		
skos:prefLabel	value vocabulary	value vocabulary		
skos:altLabel	metadata element set	metadata element set		
rdakit:toolkitLabel	element set	element set		
rdakit:toolkitDefinition	A category of linked data work that defines classes and properties that are used in a dataset.	A category of linked data work that defines classes and properties that are used in a dataset.		

New or revised translations are added in this column

Challenges of the Reference translation process

- Every label must be unique
 - In French, *series* and *collection* are both translated by *collection*. How do we differentiate the labels? Keeping in mind that the term will also appear in element labels
- Some vocabularies use specialized technical terminology, e.g. for material and production method
- Some terms simply don't exist in French, e.g. some terms for Braille music, and French equivalents had to be devised
- The 3R Project introduced many neologisms, e.g. *aggregating work*, *amalgamation*, *cardinality restriction*, *entity boundary*
- In some cases, gender agreement in French was not obvious, e.g.: *author person = personne auteure ou personne autrice?*
production designer family = famille chef décoratrice ou famille cheffe décoratrice?

Challenges of the Reference translation process

- Consistency within an element set
 - Elements with the entity Agent as the range or the domain generally have 4 narrower elements with similar labels and definitions, e.g. singer agent, singer collective agent, singer corporate body, singer family and singer person
 - Once a pattern is established, translating the narrower elements is easy but corrections can get complicated
- Consistency across different element sets
 - Elements and their inverses often have similar labels and definitions
 - Having a single template as is currently the case will help achieve consistency
- Consistency might be a bigger challenge if more than one translator is involved

Issues encountered during translation

- Using parentheses to qualify similar labels by element range was found inconsistent and confusing in the English version; parentheses were removed
 - augmentation of (work) → augmentation of work
 - catalogue (work) → catalogue work
- Parentheses cannot always be easily removed in French
 - augmentation of work → augmentation d'une œuvre
 - sequel work → œuvre ...?
 - catalogue work → œuvre catalographique?
- Parentheses retained in some instances
 - suite (œuvre)
 - catalogue (œuvre)

Issues encountered during translation

- Typos
- Inconsistencies between similar definitions
- Ambiguities in wording
- Problematic definitions. For example :
 - Definitions not adjusted for elements that had become relationship elements.

Example:

- **coordinates of cartographic content** (range = Place)
- *Original definition in beta Toolkit:* A mathematical system for identifying a place covered by the cartographic content of a work.
- *Revised definition:* **A place** that is the area of coverage of a cartographic work that is described using a mathematical system to identify its boundaries or location.

Problem with “issue”

- Does *issuing* cover only publication? What is the distinction between *publication*, *release* and *issuance*?
 - Scope note for name of publisher: Publication includes release and issuance. Google translation of note (July 2019): La publication inclut la publication et la publication (!!).
- issuing body agent, issuing body collective agent, issuing body corporate body, etc.
 - *Issuing body* used to refer only to a corporate body under AACR2. How to translate *issuing body* when the term applies to all types of agents? Could *body* be omitted?

To learn more about the original French translation project:

Clément Arsenault, Daniel Paradis & Pat Riva (2014) Translating RDA into French, *Cataloging & Classification Quarterly*, 52:6-7, 704-722, DOI: [10.1080/01639374.2014.889059](https://doi.org/10.1080/01639374.2014.889059)