

To: RDA Steering Committee and RSC Working Group Chairs  
From: Gordon Dunsire, RSC Chair  
Subject: Outcomes of the October 2017 RSC Plus Meeting

The third meeting of the RDA Steering Committee (RSC), plus Working Group chairs, was held from October 24-26, 2017 at the Biblioteca Nacional de España (BNE) in Madrid, Spain.

The meeting focused on the 3R Project (RDA Toolkit Restructure and Redesign Project) and was held entirely in executive session. As at the May 2017 meeting in Chicago, the RSC welcomed six Working Group chairs (who comprise the “plus” in RSC Plus) as equal participants in the meeting; the backup representative for the Europe region also attended. Discussions benefitted significantly from their input, and from the guidance of James Hennelly, Director of ALA Digital Publishing, who attended the meeting ex officio.

The RSC wishes to thank the Biblioteca Nacional de España, particularly Ana Santos Aramburo, María Jesús Morillo, Ricardo Santos, Roberto Gomez, Pilar Tejero, and Adelaida Caro, for the kind invitation to meet in their magnificent building and for their gracious hospitality.



**RSC Plus:** Back row (left to right): William Leonard, Francis Lapka, Kate James, Pat Riva, Ebe Kartus, Daniel Paradis; Third row: James Hennelly, Renate Behrens, David Reser, Ahava Cohen, Kathy Glennan, Gordon Dunsire; Second row: Damian Iseminger, Amanda Sprochi, Deborah Fritz; Front row: Linda Barnhart, Alan Danskin

## RDA Week

“RDA Week” in Spain began on Monday morning, October 23, 2017, with a very successful public event titled “Preparing for the new RDA Toolkit.” The event was attended by approximately 90 people and was streamed live to 290 people; [the video recording with Spanish translation](#) is available on the BNE website. After a very warm welcome by Ana Santos Aramburo (General Director, Biblioteca Nacional de España), James Hennelly presented the professional design team’s most recent mockups of the new Toolkit. He described in detail the new Toolkit site’s functionality, navigation methods, and personalization options. Linda Barnhart (RSC Secretary) and Kate James (RDA Examples Editor) talked about changes to the content of the new Toolkit, including IFLA Library Reference Model (LRM) implementation and changes in how examples are presented. Three larger [special topics for discussion](#) were then introduced: Serials, aggregates, and changes over time; Types of description; and Developing attributes as relationships (presented by Gordon Dunsire, RSC Chair and Damian Iseminger, Music Working Group Chair). A lively question-and-answer session followed.

On Monday afternoon, a face-to-face meeting with RDA translators was facilitated by Daniel Paradis, RSC Translations Team Liaison Officer. Eleven translators joined the RSC Plus members and observers in sharing work methods, successes, and concerns. The meeting was recorded so that translators who were unable to attend could be informed. Specific challenges that were discussed included English homonyms, the translation of examples, and issues of gender in the labels of relationship designators. This first in-person meeting of translators discussed the proposed timetables for translating new 3R content, such as the general chapters that are currently in preparation. Workflows using Open Metadata Registry (OMR) spreadsheets and the recently implemented Trados translation software were also reviewed.

RSC Plus met in Executive Session from Tuesday through Thursday to discuss progress on the 3R Project; specific outcomes from those discussions are given below.

On Friday, the BNE held a very well-attended and live-streamed open seminar called “Development of RDA and implementation use cases in Europe.” In addition to presentations on the new Toolkit design by James Hennelly and on [RDA data and context](#) by Gordon Dunsire, there were presentations on RDA implementation in the German-speaking countries (Renate Behrens and Christian Aliverti), in Iceland (Ragna Steinarsdottir), in Catalonia (Imma Ferran), and at the Biblioteca Nacional de España (Ricardo Santos). Philippe Le Pape (ABES) and Françoise Leresche (BnF) also spoke about the French way towards FRBR/LRM. [A video recording with Spanish translation](#) is available on the BNE website.

## General Information

The deadline for applications for the two positions of RSC Chair-Elect and Wider Community Engagement Officer was after the RSC meeting ended, so decisions on these positions will be made through the prescribed processes and announced in due course. [Reports](#) were received from the RSC Chair, RSC Secretary, RDA Examples Editor, and Co-Publisher.

Implementation of the new governance structure continues to move forward. The Oceania region, through the ORDAC group, drafted formal terms of reference for consideration at the November RDA Board meeting. If approved by the Board, ORDAC will be officially constituted beginning January 1, 2018. The North American region, through the NARDAC group, has presented draft terms of reference to its constituent groups: the Canadian Committee on Cataloguing, the American Library Association, and the Library of Congress. They intend to submit the final NARDAC terms of reference for approval at the same RDA Board meeting.

RSC held a broad discussion of the meaning of data interoperability in an international context. What does it mean to be an international standard? Will RDA support significant differences in interpretation through regional, national, or other application profiles or policy decisions? How much flexibility should RDA allow? RSC confirmed that RDA is an international standard and that there is no intention to move in the direction of regional standards. However, there needs to be room in RDA to add choices and to accommodate some differences. Although cataloguers have a culture of wanting direct instructions, the current information environment necessitates developing a culture of increased cataloguer judgement. Creating more choice within RDA also helps other diverse communities that RDA is reaching out to as part of its mission, such as the archives and museum communities. Interoperable data does not mean identical data. The RSC harmonizes RDA with related standards such as ISBD and ISSN using the principle of functional interoperability, allowing metadata from different sources to be used in applications.

### 3R Project: New Toolkit Design and Process

RSC reaffirmed the June 13, 2018 release date for the new Toolkit. RSC intends that although the web-based design of Toolkit will have a different appearance than does the current Toolkit, for the most part the application of RDA instructions will not change. Representing the co-publishers, James Hennelly reiterated the commitment to keep the current Toolkit site available for one year to provide a user transition period; however, RSC will no longer update or maintain this version. RSC further acknowledged that RDA, as embodied in the new Toolkit, will be under continuous improvement and will never be “finished” while digital technologies continue to develop.

The topic of RDA translations was a thread that ran through almost all RSC discussions. The full instruction set has been translated into eight languages and RDA Reference into eight more, with four in progress. RSC is acutely aware of the time needed to provide accurate and thorough translations. It is the publisher’s hope that one translation will be released at the same time as the English Toolkit in June 2018, with the other translations to follow in the subsequent release. The goal is an ongoing and timely synchronization between the base English text and each translation.

Data in the RDA Registry will drive even more content in the new Toolkit than it already does in the existing Toolkit. This allows for a more efficient maintenance process where data needs to be input in only one place. Examples of the additional data drawn from the RDA Registry that will be added to the

new Toolkit include an element's verbalized label and domain, as well as links to broader and narrower elements. RSC noted that data in the RDA Registry is open and free for use and re-use.

RSC reviewed in detail the most current mockups of the new Toolkit design. These were also shared at the Monday morning public event, and earlier versions were posted on the [RDA Toolkit blog](#). Newer mockups will be shared with the 3R User Group for their feedback, but the time for major adjustments is quickly drawing to a close. The group was very pleased with the new design, which is being prepared by user interface experts from the firm Design for Context. There was general excitement and agreement that the new Toolkit interface would be easier to navigate and will make the Toolkit easier to use. New to the Toolkit are the visual browser, a graphical interface to element and relationship navigation, and a ready reference button that will expand to provide brief facts about the element.

### 3R Project: Changes to RDA Content

The most important and substantive RSC discussion was on the impact of the LRM on continuing resources. Initial ideas were developed in conjunction with the ISSN International Centre (ISSN IC) following the IFLA WLIC meeting in Wrocław in August and will be voiced in a forthcoming joint paper "ISSN/RSC Discussion paper: Issues on IFLA-LRM alignment for Serials and Other Continuing Resources." A briefing paper that outlines specific ramifications for RDA, "Impact of the LRM on aggregates and serials in RDA," developed by the RSC Aggregates Working Group (AWG) and the RSC Chair, was also discussed. The concepts described in the following bullet points reflect RSC discussion and will need to be further explored and worked out according to the protocols between RSC and the ISSN IC.

In general, RSC supported the recommendations made in the serials section of the briefing paper but did not finish discussion nor reach conclusions about the non-serial aggregates aspects. Discussion will continue online. RSC endorsed a re-conceptualization of the instructions, in parallel with work being done by the ISSN IC, leading to a new model, terms, and definitions for diachronic works (works planned to be embodied over time, rather than as a single "act of publication"—which include serials but also any successive or integrating works, whether finite or open-ended).

- **Terminology.** RSC intends to clarify the terminology used in the LRM as well as the scope of what the LRM calls "serials." RSC accepted a suggestion to use the "extension requirement" and "extension termination" attributes provided by the RDA/ONIX framework (ROF) to create a new RDA element, tentatively called "extension plan." More work will be needed to settle upon final labels and definitions. The group decided not to differentiate between the ROF concepts of "essential" and "inessential." Categories recommended (with terminology to be further discussed) include: static work, integrating monographic work, sequential monographic work, integrating continuing work, and serial work.
- **Specific instructions.** Significant characteristics of continuing resources make it relevant, at the beginning of the bibliographic treatment process, to distinguish between resources with and without a pre-determined conclusion, and to create specific instructions for the second kind of resource. RSC plans to add a new general chapter on pre-cataloguing decisions and recognizes that instructions will need to be created or adjusted throughout RDA

- **Work entity.** For resources without a pre-determined conclusion, most data elements should be at the work level. This is a clear difference from the current conceptual model, which suggests that serials are described at the manifestation level. For example, the ISSN identifier itself should be considered as an identifier for the work. This has a direct effect on the “mode of issuance” manifestation attribute, which will need to be re-worked.
- **Publication plan.** A “serial work” is in essence a publication plan, the plan to publish a serial (or another type of continuing resource) that holds certain characteristics. This articulates and clarifies the general approach that serial cataloguers have always used, although it has not been previously expressed in this way. Serial cataloguers know that cataloguing the results of a plan before it is completed is difficult because one never knows what may happen, and one must rely on the evidence of the plan presented in sequential issues of the manifestation as they are published or produced. RDA intends to develop guidelines and examples to clarify this concept. This approach may help to alleviate some of the long-standing confusion between the description of a specific issue of a serial manifestation and of the serial as a whole.
- **Change in plan.** As a serial work is a plan to publish or produce a specific manifestation over time, a new serial work is generated if the plan changes. A change of plan is indicated when the manifestation of the latest expression indicates a change in the value of one or more component elements of the plan. Again, more work will be needed to define the boundaries for new serial works and provide guidance to support cataloguer’s judgement.
- **Work clusters.** RSC discussed the notion of a “work cluster” that would group and identify diachronic works that are in some kind of relationship, much in the same way that an ISNI identifies a Nomen cluster. (The group noted that monographic works have work clusters, too—such as prequels and sequels—but their role is not as significant, and these can be adequately accommodated through relationship designators.) Incorporating the new concept of work cluster might help to explain the focus of the ISSN-L identifier. For example, the ISSN-L could be an additional access point for every work in a cluster. More work will need to be done to determine the relationships, boundaries, and transformation refinements that will define a work cluster. An additional impact may be the need to create a serial authority record to link together all works in a cluster.

RSC continued to discuss the modelling of aggregates, and agreed about the three LRM categories of aggregates.

In responding to an update from the Fictitious Entities Working Group Chair, the RSC accepted the recommendation to use the label "non-human personages." The RSC also agreed that most non-human personages are a pseudonym for a person and should be treated as such in RDA. RSC agreed that "animal actors" cannot be agents in the LRM and RDA sense, and so cannot use the same relationship designators as agents. RSC will consider developing a refinement of the "association" relationship to express this relationship. Manifestation statements can be used to record assertions about non-human personages, fictitious places, etc. The Fictitious Entities Working Group was thanked for their work exploring the challenges in this area.

RSC confirmed their agreement to move forward with several developments that were under consideration from the May 2017 RSC meeting. RDA will introduce access points as elements, and will add identifiers as elements for all entities. RSC ratified the four recording methods (unstructured, structured, identifiers, and IRIs--formerly called the 4-fold path) as an infrastructure for all elements, although specific methods may not apply for certain elements. The group agreed on a new approach to examples that includes “view in context” and “view as relationship” examples as well as examples for the various recording methods.

A number of minor decisions about new Toolkit content were taken:

- A new higher-level element “material” will be added to RDA to encompass the merger of two lower-level vocabularies: base material and applied material.
- RDA will not immediately develop name elements into “surname” and “forename” (or direct order and indirect order) and will reconsider this after the 3R Project.
- Labels for element names will not contain punctuation (in other words, “publisher’s name” will become “name of publisher” and “time-span” will become “timespan”). This will avoid indexing and search errors arising from different encoding of near-indistinguishable punctuation marks.
- All existing elements will be included in the new Toolkit unless semantically incorrect. Some elements will be “soft deprecated,” meaning that while they will remain valid, there will be an indication in the instructions that this is a legacy practice and a different approach will be recommended.
- RSC confirmed that two sets of transcription “rules” will be part of the new Toolkit: a basic set that is as close to a machine transcription as possible (minimal human intervention) and a second set intended for compatibility with legacy metadata statements.
- RSC reviewed the RDA appendices and made decisions about whether and how appendix content should reside in the new Toolkit.
- RSC agreed that provenance (meaning who, when, and why a metadata statement was asserted—not the meaning commonly used by the archives community) was a key piece of meta-metadata for all elements and should be part of RDA. For now, this will take the form of general guidance and not specific instructions.
- The instructions within each element for sources of information will be dropped in favor of general guidance at a higher level about how to choose sources of information, and their relationship to provenance. Specific communities could step in with policy statements if this is important to them.

### Next Steps

The Madrid meeting is the final in-person meeting for the RSC+ phase of the 3R Project and governance transition, although online work with the Working Group Chairs will continue through the new Toolkit release. The contributions made by the Working Group Chairs have been invaluable; they have provided RSC with sharp insight, fresh perspectives, and renewed energy. RSC expresses its deepest thanks for their professional and personal contributions and commitment.

RSC will sponsor a preconference called “RDA Toolkit Redesign Update and Preview” at the ALA Midwinter meeting in Denver on Friday, February 9, 2018 from 8:30 a.m.- 4:00 p.m. in the Colorado Convention Center, Room 201. [Registration is open](#) and seating is limited.

RSC also plans to sponsor a preconference at the 2018 ALA Annual meeting in New Orleans to support the rollout of the new Toolkit, including basic navigation and an introduction to the re-organized content. Other communities, such as EURIG, will provide similar information sessions in the coming months.

The RDA Board, with assistance from ORDAC, is organizing a non-IFLA satellite meeting about the 3R Project, focused on the Asian region, at the National Library of Malaysia on Thursday, August 23, 2018, just before the IFLA WLIC.

RSC expects to meet again in October or November 2018 and welcomes invitations from institutions that may be interested in hosting.