

To: RDA Steering Committee
From: Dave Reser, LC Representative
Subject: Early Printed Resources and Rare Printed Resources

We agree in principle with the idea in RSC/RareWG/1 that every agency has resources it considers appropriate for a more detailed description and that the criteria for such resources should not be limited to a specific period of manufacture. We also agree with the idea that RDA should allow agencies the flexibility to provide more detailed description of whatever resources that it considers “rare.”

However, we also believe there should be flexibility for an agency *not* to provide more detailed description for “rare” or “early” resources, in keeping with the objectives of cost efficiency (0.4.3.2) and continuity (0.4.2.4). Within the RDA instructions themselves, there does not need to be the same level of instruction as there is in a specialist manual as long as RDA provides enough flexibility to allow for interoperability between RDA and such a specialist manual. For this reason, we do not agree to some of the changes in the proposal, but we have suggested changes that will allow for the goals stated in the proposal.

Changing Exceptions for Early Printed Resources

Because proposed revisions to the run-in subhead *Early printed resources* are discussed generally in **Issue #2** of this proposal, but the proposals that show the results of option 4 in **Issue #2** are also found in RSC/RareWG/2 and RSC/RareWG/3, there is some repetition of comments in our responses. For the general issue related to “early” and/or “rare,” our comments are in this response.

Except for 1.8.1 Alternative (which RSC/RareWG/2 proposes to change), all of the current instructions in RDA with the run-in subhead *Early printed resources* are labelled as Exceptions. In retrospect, we are not certain that was the correct approach for all these instructions because it provides no flexibility for agencies that do not want to provide a different level of description based on when a resource was printed. As this proposal says, the concept of “early printed” varies depending on the place of manufacture, and when the advent of machine printing became applicable in that place. We agree with this conclusion, but think there still might be some confusion with the proposed definition (see suggested changes below). We are concerned that this may cause a broadening of “early printed resource” that will force agencies who want to use RDA to follow these Exceptions when they may not be necessary for fulfilling user tasks in all cases.

Agencies may feel that consistency in cataloging treatment is more important than providing a very precise physical description. For example, according to 3.4.5.4 Exception, a book printed in 1790 could have this recorded as its pagination: **xii pages, 1 unnumbered page, 14–176 pages**. If that book is reprinted in 1925 with no change to its pagination, the pagination would be recorded as **176 pages**. This inconsistent

approach might lead a user to believe there are differences in the physical characteristics of the manifestations when they are actually identical in every way except the title page.

Rather than continue with the practice of labeling many instructions for early printed resources as Exceptions, we suggest that the working group consider whether it would be more appropriate to designate them as Alternatives or Optional Additions (depending on the type of instruction), which allows agencies to better scope the particular resources it wants to provide that type of description for, and allows them to follow the basic instructions when it determines that those instructions are sufficient.

Another idea would be to code the metadata for instructions in the XML RDA Toolkit as early or rare, and allow for a new search limit for these instructions. We have never been completely happy with the **RDA Instruction Types limit** feature in the Toolkit, but future Toolkit enhancements may yield better possibilities for this idea.

We also found the proposed wording “early printed resources and rare printed resources” unnecessarily wordy. While we sympathize with the desire to easily identify all instructions related to “early printed resources” (the working group’s reason for rejecting option 3 under Issue #2), it is better to do this through search features than lengthy run-in subheads.

Change #1: Definition of early printed resources

We note that the current glossary definition has changed since this proposal was written. In the August 2016 Toolkit release, the current glossary entry is for the singular term “early printed resource” and begins “A material manufactured” rather than “Materials manufactured.” The current wording is still confusing because “A material” at the beginning of a definition follows the pattern of definitions for terms in the new “Materials” vocabulary (combining the former vocabularies for base material, applied material, and mount). We agree with the working group’s conclusion that the current definition can vary by place of manufacture, however we’re not convinced that the revision solves this problem completely as even in a single place there was overlap between the hand-press and machine printing periods. We wonder if the definition being sought is for those resources that were actually manufactured using a hand-press method, during an early period.

We suggest a few slight changes to the proposed definition:

- replace the current wording of “A material”; we suggest “A resource” would be better (see our comment also in **Issues for future consideration**);
- replace the words “manufactured during the hand-press period” with wording indicating that a hand-press method was used;

- if the RSC determines that “early printed resources” are to be considered a subcategory of “rare printed resources,” then the definition should reflect this.

Mark-up (using August 2016 glossary entry):

early printed resource A ~~material~~ resource manufactured before the advent of machine printing using a hand-press method ~~in approximately 1825–1830~~.

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early printed resource A resource manufactured before the advent of machine printing using a hand-press method.

Change #2: Definition for rare printed resources

We feel unprepared to respond definitively to Change #2 without further discussion of these points (raised by our reviewers):

- a) Should the definition and instructions really be limited to “printed” resources? We note that the working group itself proposed expansion to manuscript materials in RSC/RareWG/4. It was noted that several instructions labelled in Chapter 3 now for “Early printed resources” were also appropriate for a manuscript codex.
- b) Some guidelines slated to apply to “early” or “rare” resources may have equal applicability as an Alternative, or optional approach to **general** materials.

Change #3: revision of 2.15 (“fingerprints” as identifiers)

While we appreciate the effort to expand the scope of “fingerprints,” we think it may need to be expanded further because the concept is also applicable to digital fingerprints.¹ We suggest the “i.e.” be changed to an “e.g.” and consider whether a definition for fingerprint should be added to the glossary.

Change #4: revision of 3.22.1.4

We do not agree with the proposed revision. RDA 3.22.1.4 has instructions on making the same type of notes as 3.22.1.3. In RSC/RareWG/5, the group proposed deleting 3.21.2.9 under similar circumstances. This instruction should be deleted for the same reason, and some examples from 3.22.1.4 should be included in 3.22.1.3.

Issue for Future Consideration

There are problems with the use of the term resource in RDA, and we know the RSC Chair is examining the usage of the term across RDA. If changes are made in the use of

¹ See [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fingerprint_\(computing\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fingerprint_(computing))

the term resource, it might be appropriate to change the term “early printed resource” to “early printed manifestation.” The instructions that use the caption “early printed resource” are all for manifestations, and printing is a manifestation activity.