

To: Gordon Dunsire, Chair, RDA Steering Committee
From: Francis Lapka, Chair, RSC Rare Materials Working Group
Subject: Revision to RDA 3.12 Book Format and related terms

Abstract

This proposal revises RDA 3.12 Book Format, recommending the following changes:

1. Revise the term “book format” to “bibliographical format” in order to broaden the scope of the term.
2. Revise the definition of “book format” to bring it into greater alignment with contemporary definitions of the concept of format.
3. Add appropriate terms to the list of format values.

Justification

As part of its tasks for 2016, the Rare Materials Working Group was asked to examine RDA guidelines for early printed resources and propose revisions, as needed. RDA 3.12 Book Format is applied for “early printed books, etc.” The working group identified issues described below.

Issues requiring resolution

Issue #1

RDA currently defines book format as follows (in RDA 3.12.1.1 and the Glossary):

Book format ▼ is the result of folding a printed sheet to form a gathering of leaves (e.g., a sheet folded once to form a folio, twice to form a quarto, three times to form an octavo).

The definition has multiple problems:

1. It inappropriately reduces the concept of book format to a matter of *folding*.
2. Its reference to “printed sheets” inappropriately excludes application of book format to manuscript material. Instructions for format are included in Descriptive Cataloging of Rare Materials (Manuscripts) and Descriptive Cataloging of Ancient, Medieval, Renaissance, and Early Modern Manuscripts (AMREMM). Tanselle’s definition of format (see below) also includes manuscript resources.
3. The definition of book format, and the parenthetical examples, are poorly aligned with the definition of format terms in the RDA Glossary. The parenthetical refers to “a sheet folded once to form a folio,” but the glossary defines folio (for example) as “a book

format consisting of one or more leaves that are 1/2 of the whole sheet.” These references should show greater consistency, and those in the glossary are more appropriate.

The label “book format” is also problematic, as the word “book” excludes serials and single sheet resources (both of which also have format). The term “format” is usually unmodified in literature describing the concept. Where it is modified, however, the most appropriate compound term is “bibliographical format” (the term “*bibliographic* format” is strongly associated with aspects of the MARC standard). The changes below recommend replacing the word “book” with “bibliographical.”

As for the definition of format, useful points of reference include the following:

format: <older monographic resources> the designation of the number of type-pages in each type-forme. In a folio (2o, 2:o, etc.), there are two type-pages in each forme; in a quarto (4o, 4:o, etc.), there are four; in an octavo (8o, 8:o, etc.) eight, and so on. -- ISBD, glossary.

In bibliographical usage the format of a book of the hand-press period means the arrangement of its formes and the subsequent folding of the printed sheets as indicated by the number and conjugacy of the leaves and the orientation of the paper in the gatherings, and is expressed in the terms folio, quarto, octavo, etc. -- Gaskell, P. *New Introduction to Bibliography*, 1995, p. 80

“...[format] of a volume is the ratio of the leaf to the sheet of which, before folding (and sometimes cutting), it originally formed a part. Thus a volume in which the leaf is one quarter of the original sheet is designated a quarto; one eighth an octavo; one twelfth a duodecimo.”-- McMullin, B.J. “Some notes on paper and format.” *Bulletin of the Bibliographical Society of Australia & New Zealand*, 28:4 (2004), pp. 92-104.

Format is a designation of the number of page-units (whether of printing surface, handwritten text, or blank space) that the producers of a printed or manuscript item decided upon to fill each side of a sheet of paper or vellum of the selected size(s); if paper came to a printing press in rolls rather than sheets, format can only refer to the number of page-units placed on the press at one time for the purpose of printing one side of paper. -- Tanselle, G. Thomas. "The concept of format." *Studies in Bibliography*, 53 (2000), pp. 67-115.

A synthesis of these definitions is given in Change #1 (RDA 3.12) and #2 (Glossary), below. A parallel change is suggested for Details of Book Format, in Change #2. The definitions of format values are also modified to replace the word “book” with “bibliographical.”

Issue #2

Format should be recorded when it can be readily ascertained and is considered important for identification or selection. Change #1 introduces this stipulation.

Issue #3

The current list of format values in RDA 3.12.1.3 (and in the glossary) omits some of the more common values. Some of the formats included in the list (e.g., 64mo) are less common than formats excluded from the list (e.g., 18mo). The working group recommends a list of values that corresponds to those listed in Gaskell's *New Introduction to Bibliography* (p. 86).

Issue #4

RDA 3.12.1.3 Recording Book Formats omits RDA's boilerplate instruction "If none of the terms in the list is appropriate or sufficiently specific, use another concise term to indicate the ..." The D-A-CH policy statement in 3.12.1.3 addresses this shortcoming. Change #1, below, adds the boilerplate language to the RDA instruction, and suggests several examples.

Issue #5

RDA 3.12.1.4 Details of Book Format would benefit from examples. Suggestions are offered in Change #1.

Impact of the revisions

The recommended revisions will bring RDA's definition of book/bibliographical format into greater alignment with contemporary definitions of the concept.

Change #1: RDA 3.12 Book Format

Marked-up version:

3.12 ~~Book~~ Bibliographical Format

3.12.1 Basic Instructions on Recording ~~Book~~ Bibliographical Formats

3.12.1.1 Scope

~~**Book format** ▼ is the result of folding a printed sheet to form a gathering of leaves (e.g., a sheet folded once to form a folio, twice to form a quarto, three times to form an octavo).~~

Bibliographical format ▼ is the proportional relationship between a whole sheet of paper or vellum in a printed or manuscript resource, and the individual leaves that result when that sheet

is cut or folded (e.g., a leaf or gathering in folio occupies half the original whole sheet, in 4to a quarter of the sheet, in 8vo an eighth).

3.12.1.2 Sources of Information

Use evidence presented by the resource itself (or on any accompanying material or container) as the basis for recording the ~~book~~ bibliographical format. Take additional evidence from any source.

3.12.1.3 Recording ~~Book~~ Bibliographical Formats

For ~~an~~ early printed ~~book~~ resources, etc., record the ~~book~~ bibliographical format if it can be readily ascertained and is considered important for identification or selection. ~~using~~ Use an appropriate term from the following list:

full-sheet

folio

4to

8vo

12mo

16mo

18mo

24mo

32mo

36mo

48mo

64mo

72mo

96mo

128mo

EXAMPLE

4to

8vo

folio

If none of the terms in the list is appropriate or sufficiently specific, use another concise term to indicate the bibliographical format.

EXAMPLE

long 24mo

oblong 4to

Record details of ~~book~~ bibliographical format as instructed at **3.12.1.4**.

3.12.1.4 Details of ~~Book~~ Bibliographical Format

Record **details of ~~book~~ bibliographical format** ▼ if considered important for identification or selection. For scope and sources of information, see **3.12.1.1** and **3.12.1.2**.

EXAMPLE

Gathered in eights

Volumes 1-4 are 4to; volumes 5-7 are 8vo.

Horizontal chain-lines.

Clean-copy version:

3.12 Bibliographical Format

3.12.1 Basic Instructions on Recording Bibliographical Format

3.12.1.1 Scope

Bibliographical format ▼ is the proportional relationship between a whole sheet of paper or vellum in a printed or manuscript resource, and the individual leaves that result when that sheet is cut or folded (e.g., a leaf or gathering in folio occupies half the original whole sheet, in 4to a quarter of the sheet, in 8vo an eighth).

3.12.1.2 Sources of Information

Use evidence presented by the resource itself (or on any accompanying material or container) as the basis for recording the bibliographical format. Take additional evidence from any source.

3.12.1.3 Recording Bibliographical Format

For early printed resources, etc., record the bibliographical format if it can be readily ascertained and is considered important for identification or selection. Use an appropriate term from the following list:

full-sheet

folio

4to

8vo

12mo

16mo

18mo

24mo

32mo

36mo

48mo

64mo

72mo

96mo

128mo

EXAMPLE

4to

8vo

folio

If none of the terms in the list is appropriate or sufficiently specific, use another concise term to indicate the bibliographical format.

EXAMPLE

long 24mo

oblong 4to

Record details of bibliographical format as instructed at [3.12.1.4](#).

3.12.1.4 Details of Bibliographical Format

Record **details of bibliographical format** ▼ if considered important for identification or selection. For scope and sources of information, see [3.12.1.1](#) and [3.12.1.2](#).

EXAMPLE

Gathered in eights

Volumes 1-4 are 4to; volumes 5-7 are 8vo.

Horizontal chain-lines.

Change #2: RDA Glossary

Marked-up version:

[Glossary]

2o folio ▼

4to A ~~book~~ bibliographical format consisting of one or more leaves that are 1/4 of the whole sheet.

8vo A ~~book~~ bibliographical format consisting of one or more leaves that are 1/8 of the whole sheet.

12mo A ~~book~~ bibliographical format consisting of one or more leaves that are 1/12 of the whole sheet.

16mo A ~~book~~ bibliographical format consisting of one or more leaves that are 1/16 of the whole sheet.

24mo A ~~book~~ bibliographical format consisting of one or more leaves that are 1/24 of the whole sheet.

32mo A ~~book~~ bibliographical format consisting of one or more leaves that are 1/32 of the whole sheet.

36mo A bibliographical format consisting of one or more leaves that are 1/36 of the whole sheet.

48mo A ~~book~~ bibliographical format consisting of one or more leaves that are 1/48 of the whole sheet.

64mo A ~~book~~ bibliographical format consisting of one or more leaves that are 1/64 of the whole sheet.

72mo A bibliographical format consisting of one or more leaves that are 1/72 of the whole sheet.

96mo A bibliographical format consisting of one or more leaves that are 1/96 of the whole sheet.

128mo A bibliographical format consisting of one or more leaves that are 1/128 of the whole sheet.

book bibliographical format ~~The result of folding a printed sheet to form a gathering of leaves (e.g., a sheet folded once to form a folio, twice to form a quarto, three times to form an octavo, etc.).~~ The proportional relationship between a whole sheet of paper or vellum in a printed or manuscript resource, and the individual leaves that result when that sheet is cut or folded (e.g., a leaf or gathering in folio occupies half the original whole sheet, in 4to a quarter of the sheet, in 8vo an eighth).

details of book bibliographical format ~~Details of the result of folding a printed sheet to form a gathering of leaves (e.g., a sheet folded once to form a folio, twice to form a 4to, three times to form an 8to, etc.).~~ Details of the proportional relationship between a whole sheet of paper or vellum in a printed or manuscript resource, and the individual leaves that result when that sheet is cut or folded (e.g., a leaf or gathering in folio occupies half the original whole sheet, in 4to a quarter of the sheet, in 8vo an eighth).

folio A ~~book~~ bibliographical format consisting of one or more leaves that are 1/2 of the whole sheet.

full-sheet A bibliographical format consisting of one or more leaves that are the entirety of the whole sheet.

Clean-copy version:

[Glossary]

2o folio ▼

4to A bibliographical format consisting of one or more leaves that are 1/4 of the whole sheet.

8vo A bibliographical format consisting of one or more leaves that are 1/8 of the whole sheet.

12mo A bibliographical format consisting of one or more leaves that are 1/12 of the whole sheet.

16mo A bibliographical format consisting of one or more leaves that are 1/16 of the whole sheet.

24mo A bibliographical format consisting of one or more leaves that are 1/24 of the whole sheet.

32mo A bibliographical format consisting of one or more leaves that are 1/32 of the whole sheet.

36mo A bibliographical format consisting of one or more leaves that are 1/36 of the whole sheet.

48mo A bibliographical format consisting of one or more leaves that are 1/48 of the whole sheet.

64mo A bibliographical format consisting of one or more leaves that are 1/64 of the whole sheet.

72mo A bibliographical format consisting of one or more leaves that are 1/72 of the whole sheet.

96mo A bibliographical format consisting of one or more leaves that are 1/96 of the whole sheet.

128mo A bibliographical format consisting of one or more leaves that are 1/128 of the whole sheet.

bibliographical format The proportional relationship between a whole sheet of paper or vellum in a printed or manuscript resource, and the individual leaves that result when that sheet is cut or folded (e.g., a leaf or gathering in folio occupies half the original whole sheet, in 4to a quarter of the sheet, in 8vo an eighth).

details of bibliographical format Details of the proportional relationship between a whole sheet of paper or vellum in a printed or manuscript resource, and the individual leaves that result when that sheet is cut or folded (e.g., a leaf or gathering in folio occupies half the original whole sheet, in 4to a quarter of the sheet, in 8vo an eighth).

folio A bibliographical format consisting of one or more leaves that are 1/2 of the whole sheet.

full-sheet A bibliographical format consisting of one or more leaves that are the entirety of the whole sheet.

Other changes in RDA

This proposal does not affect other instructions or references to/from other instructions.

Changes to the RDA Element Set

The proposal would change the label and definition of the following RDA elements:

- book format
- details of book format