

To: Gordon Dunsire, Chair, RDA Steering Committee  
From: Francis Lapka, Chair, RSC Rare Materials Working Group  
Subject: RSC-TechnicalWG-1, RDA models for provenance data

## General comments

The Rare Materials WG thanks the Technical WG for the proposal. We are intrigued by the recommendations, but there are aspects that require clarification before we can give our support. We identify areas of concern in response to recommendations 2-4.

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**Recommendation 2:** Generalize the scope of application of *cataloguer's note* and *source consulted* to any RDA element and provide contextual guidance on applicability to specific elements.

The Rare Materials WG has mild concern about the ambiguity of the intended audience for data recorded in the two elements, as described below.

In standards for rare materials description (such as DCRM), there is ample tradition of recording data (in notes) to justify data recorded in other elements of the description. For example:

**Note on Publication Statement:** Thomas Saint was active in Newcastle upon Tyne from ca 1769 to ca 1788. Source: Dictionary of the printers and booksellers who were at work in England, Scotland and Ireland from 1726 to 1775 / H.R. Plomer, 3, p. 221.

*Comment:* Information given to substantiate a publication date

**Note on Publication Statement:** "Ostensibly published in 1850, though it could not have gone to the engravers, Sherman and Smith of New York, until early in 1851"--Wheat.

*Comment:* Information given to substantiate a publication date, in conjunction with a reference to a description in: Wheat, C.I. Mapping the transmississippi West, 1540-1861.

**Note on Title:** Title from Hollstein.

*Comment:* Information given to substantiate a title proper, in conjunction with a reference to a description in: Hollstein, F.W.H. Dutch and Flemish etchings, engravings, and woodcuts, ca. 1450-1700, volume XV, page 17, entry B.16

In the framework of TechnicalWG/1, the third of these examples is a simple *source consulted*. The first two, however, appear to embody both *cataloger's note* and *source consulted*. Is it the intention of the proposal that both elements would be used for such examples? Can a cataloger's note have a source consulted?

Such notes fulfill user tasks to *understand* why data identifying Manifestations and Items have been recorded. In standards for rare materials, such as DCRM, such notes are often required components of the description. The data are intended for all users, including (but not limited to) fellow catalogers.

The Rare Materials WG has mild fear that data in the proposed meta-elements might be treated as second-class data (to be omitted, perhaps, in certain catalog displays). If RDA meta-elements are intended for catalogers only, and seen as replacements for notes currently in RDA chapters 2 and 3, then the Rare Materials WG strongly disagrees with the recommended changes. This outcome would be to the detriment of users.

We assume, however, that the Technical WG has no intention of demoting the importance of the data in question; and we acknowledge that specifications for data display are outside the scope of RDA. We hope that associated RDA tools, such as mappings to other content or encoding standards, will help clarify that data recorded in the proposed meta-elements play a role in fulfilling user tasks.

The recommended changes acknowledge that the user task *understand* is applicable to attributes of Manifestations and Items (and other entities). This change will require an update to RDA 0.4.2.1 Responsiveness to User Needs. Currently, the *understand* task is described as follows:

*understand* the relationship between two or more entities

*understand* the relationship between the entity described and a name by which that entity is known (e.g., a different language form of the name)

*understand* why a particular name or title has been chosen as the preferred name or title for the entity.

By addition or revision, this list should include a statement along the lines of “*understand* why an [identifying?] attribute or relationship [beyond preferred name or preferred title] has been recorded.”

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**Recommendation 3:** Consider creating the meta-elements *transcription note*, *transcription source*, and *transcription rules* when introducing separate elements for transcriptions.

As with recommendation 2, the Rare Materials WG would like a clearer indication of the intended audience for data in the new meta-elements. As the Technical WG is no doubt aware, it is common practice in rare materials cataloging to record information that is within scope of the transcription meta-elements proposed in the paper. In descriptions of rare materials, data about transcriptions are intended for all users. The data frequently support the user tasks to *identify* the resource described or *understand* why a transcription is recorded (in the form recorded).

A number of the current examples in RDA *Note on ...* statements (2.17.2 - 2.17.11) are within scope of the proposed meta-elements and are applicable to rare materials. The following are also typical of descriptive practice for rare materials:

*Transcription notes:*

Initial letter space left blank by printer

**Title proper:** [T]he true history of recent events

26 other publishers mentioned in the imprint

**Publisher's name:** Printed for F.C. and J. Rivington, Otridge and Son, J. Nichols and Co. ...

On the map, the edition statement appears between the place and date of publication in the imprint

*Transcription source:*

Publisher statement on cancel slip. Original publisher statement reads: Sold by G. Walsh

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**Recommendation 4:** Develop general guidance on recording provenance data and using RDA meta-elements.

The Rare Materials WG agrees with the recommendation.

We wonder if it would also be appropriate to develop a meta-element for information about the descriptive standards, policy statements, or application profiles used in the creation of an RDA Data Statement or RDA Data Set. Such a meta-element would be a close cousin of the *transcription rules* meta-element proposed in recommendation 3.

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### **Change #1: New instructions at RDA 0.13**

The proposed instruction in RDA 0.13.1.3 says “Cite a source used ...,” without guidance on the *form* of citation. The examples, however, are entirely of the form commonly used in authority records. If the Technical WG intends that all citations must be in this form, then the instructions require elaboration. If other forms are equally acceptable, then the uniformity of examples is misleading.

The Rare Materials WG recommends that the form of citation should not be prescribed. On page 7 of the proposal, it is noted: “Some, if not all, meta-elements should accommodate the 4-fold path of unstructured and structured descriptions, identifiers (VESs), and URIs.” The RMWG encourages use of the 4-fold path in development of instructions for 0.13.1.3. Such development -- especially when also identifying “the specific location within the source where the information was found” (the optional addition) -- would go a long way to resolving the issues identified in [6JSC/ALA/45 Referential Relationships](#).

Replacing instructions in the introductory chapters 5, 8, 24, and 29 with the proposed instructions 0.13-0.14 is a sensible change. However, the introductory chapters 5, 8, 24, and 29 also include sections (5.2, 8.2, 24.2 and 29.2) that describe the functional objectives and principles of the data recorded in association with those chapters, naming the users tasks that are supported. If all RDA data is recorded to enable user tasks, then a section on functional objectives and principles must be associated with the new instructions at 0.13-0.14.

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### **Change #2: Revisions for referencing RDA 0.13-0.14**

The WG finds options 2a1 and 2a2 acceptable. Option 2b would be cumbersome and out of tune with RDA style (the equivalent of including a reference to RDA 1.7 Transcription in the instructions for every element in RDA that is transcribed).