

Representative expressions of an aggregating work

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Abstract

This paper makes recommendations for the refinement of the utility of representative expression elements for aggregating works.

The recommendations are extracted from the proposals paper on “RDA content elements” discussed by the RSC at its January 2020 meeting, and updated to reflect the discussion.

Clean copies of amended RDA Toolkit pages are available in appendices 1-4 and the updated appendix 14 that accompanied the proposals paper.

Background

Aggregates model

Figure 1 shows the basic model for aggregates in the IFLA Library Reference Model:

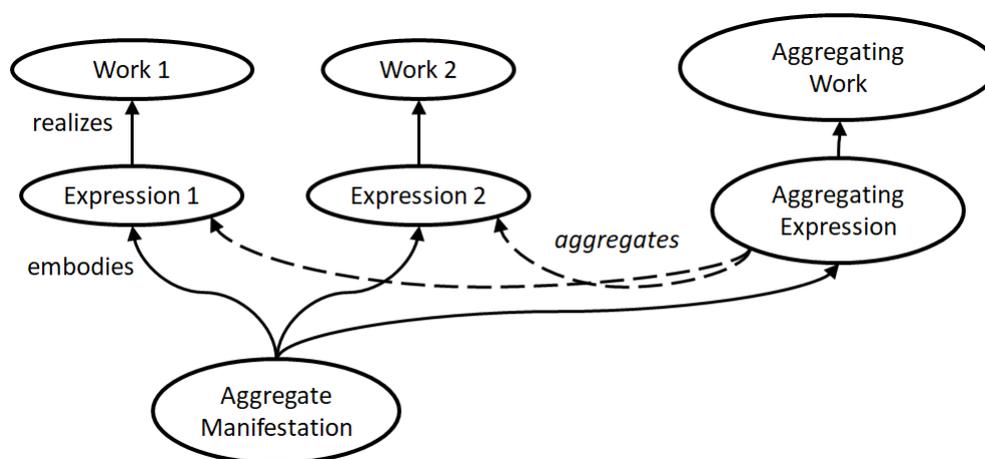


Figure 1: Basic model for aggregates

Solid arrows indicate direct relationship elements; dashed arrows indicate shortcut relationship elements.

An aggregate manifestation embodies two or more distinct expressions¹ and an aggregating expression that realizes the plan for aggregating the other expressions.

¹ In some cases, there is only one expression that is aggregated. For example, the plan may be to aggregate an ‘annual top 5’ of expressions; if no expressions are published in a particular year, the aggregate is not published, if only one expression is published that year, the ‘aggregate’ is published.

The recording of separate entities for the expressions or works embodied by an aggregate manifestation is optional. An application can choose to record any or all of the aggregating expression and work, or any or all of the expressions that are aggregated and their works.

Aggregating expression

The RDA term ‘aggregating expression’ is defined as: An expression that is the realization of an aggregating work that selects and arranges expressions of one or more works, and embodies them in an aggregate.

The definition refers only to the context of the aggregating work.

The RDA term ‘aggregating work’ is defined as: A work that is a plan to select and arrange one or more expressions of one or more works, and embody them in an aggregate.

The definition does not refer to an aggregating expression.

The definitions reflect the LRM’s treatment of aggregating works and expressions. The LRM defines an aggregating expression in terms of the aggregating work. The LRM uses ‘aggregating expression’ and ‘expression of an aggregating work’ interchangeably. The only additional information about an aggregating expression is given in the scope note for LRM-R25 (was aggregated by/aggregated):

“Unlike the whole-part relationship between *expressions*, the *expressions* selected to appear together in the aggregate *manifestation* do not become components of the aggregating *expression*. Furthermore, the relationship between these *expressions* is not an inherent feature of the *works* that these *expressions* realize, and thus is does not hold in other *expressions* of those *works*.”

An aggregating expression does not accumulate or inherit the characteristics of the expressions that are aggregated.

An aggregating expression that ‘aggregates’ a set of expressions that are English texts does not itself have English as a language of expression or text as a content type.

No attribute elements for an expression are applicable to an aggregating expression because an aggregating expression has no intrinsic characteristics that are worth recording.

Representative expression of an aggregating work

The LRM introduces the idea of a ‘representative expression attribute’; this is a Work attribute that “records the values of those *expression* attributes considered essential in characterizing the *work*”.

The LRM scope note for the high-level attribute states:

“The values of these attributes are inferred either from particular *expressions* considered to best represent the *work*, or from characteristics abstracted from a more or less nebulous network of similar *expressions*. There is no requirement to precisely identify an *expression* or *expressions* which serves as source for the values of the *representative expression attributes*, nor does that *expression* need to be recorded in the case where it is identified.”

An aggregating work is realized by one and only one aggregating expression. This means that the aggregating expression is the only possible representative expression for an aggregating work.

An aggregating expression has no utility as a representative expression because it has no characteristics that are useful for identifying or distinguishing its aggregating work. Therefore the representative expression elements for an aggregating work have no source of values unless special instructions are added.

The basis of such instructions is an extension of “a more or less nebulous network of similar expressions” to cover the set of expressions that are aggregated in an aggregate manifestation. Although these are not ‘similar’ expressions, the set meets the expectations of end-users who “consider certain characteristics as inherent in works and that expressions that reflect those characteristics can be felt to best represent the intention of the creators of that work” (LRM 5.6 Representative Expression Attributes).

The LRM model of aggregates is not intuitive to end-users. An end-user is likely to expect the description of an aggregating work to include information about the characteristics of the expressions that are aggregated. In some cases the common values of a characteristic will be expected; in other cases the prominent values will be expected.

Recommendation 1: add specific optional instructions for representative expression elements for aggregating works.

Values from [single expressions that are aggregated](#)

The following representative expression elements can record values taken from one or more of the expressions that are aggregated:

- Work: aspect ratio of representative expression
- Work: content type of representative expression
- Work: date of capture of representative expression
- Work: date of representative expression
- Work: intended audience of representative expression
- Work: key of representative expression
- Work: language of representative expression
- Work: medium of performance of choreographic content of representative expression
- Work: medium of performance of musical content of representative expression
- Work: place of capture of representative expression
- Work: projection of cartographic content of representative expression
- Work: scale of representative expression
- Work: script of representative expression

Recommendation 1.1: Add a condition and option template to the Recording section of each of the representative expression elements for single expressions that are aggregated.

Condition: A work is an aggregating work.

Option: Record a value of an [Expression: language of expression] for one or more of the expressions that are aggregated.

Option: Record a value of an Expression: language of expression that is common to all of the expressions that are aggregated.

Values from the cumulated content of expressions that are aggregated

The following representative expression elements can only record a cumulation of values taken from all of the expressions that are aggregated:

- **Work: duration of representative expression**
- **Work: extent of representative expression**

Recommendation 1.2: Add a condition and option template to the Recording section of each of the representative expressions of cumulated aggregated content.

Condition: A work is an aggregating work.

Option: Record a value that is a cumulation of values of [Expression: duration of expression] for each of the expressions that are aggregated.

Values from the shortcut content of expressions that are aggregated

The following representative expression elements record a value from an aggregate manifestation shortcut content element:

- **Work: colour content of representative expression**
- **Work: sound content of representative expression**

Recommendation 1.3: Generalize the Recording section of each of the representative expressions of shortcut aggregate content elements to allow values to be taken from any manifestation that embodies a work being described.

Record a value of [Manifestation: colour content] for a manifestation that realizes a work.

Guidance

Recommendation 2: Update relevant Toolkit Guidance content to reflect the use of representative expressions for aggregating works.

Clean versions

Clean versions of new and amended content are available as appendices. Appendix 14 was amended during the January 2020 discussion, and there may be minor variations resulting from ongoing editorial work to resolve errors and improve consistency and clarity. The latest version is available on the RSC Development site.

Impact

There is no significant impact on legacy data in RDA implementation scenarios because the use of representative expression attributes is new to the LRM, and these recommendations reflect current practice based on end-user expectations.

Further development

A comprehensive review of the 'cumulation' representative expression elements for an aggregating work (duration ... and extent ...) is part of the planned development of the treatment of extent.

Instructions, string encoding schemes, and examples for the construction of access points for an aggregating work should be developed after the infrastructure for the maintenance and display of string encoding schemes is determined.

A review of **Expression: note on changes in content characteristics** will take place as part of the development of separate guidance on work boundaries. The guidance for **Recording an expression** is the only place in the Toolkit that references this element. The element is soft-deprecated, but the 'preferred' option is the guidance for describing a diachronic work, in **Recording a work**. This requires clarification.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: add specific optional instructions for representative expression elements for aggregating works.

Recommendation 1.1: Add a condition and option template to the Recording section of each of the representative expression elements for single expressions that are aggregated.

Recommendation 1.2: Add a condition and option template to the Recording section of each of the representative expressions of cumulated aggregated content.

Recommendation 1.3: Add a condition and option template to the Recording section of each of the representative expressions of shortcut aggregate content elements.

Recommendation 2: Update relevant Toolkit Guidance content to reflect the use of representative expressions for aggregating works.