

Preferred names and official languages of corporate bodies, governments, and places in RDA

Prepared by the Official Languages Working Group

Abstract

The working group was charged with analyzing the concept of “official language” for corporate bodies, and specifically to consider the text in four sections of RDA:

- Corporate Body: preferred name of corporate body
- Corporate Body: category of corporate body
- Corporate Body: category of government
- Place: preferred name of place

For corporate bodies, we have decided that official languages can be too difficult to determine and that an insistence on using them in recording the preferred name of a body can produce results that are not always true to the nature of the body and that also do not serve libraries and their patrons in different national and linguistic environments. We recommend deleting some conditions to give cataloging agencies more flexibility in applying the existing options around the language of the preferred name of a corporate body.

Our charge also includes looking at the preferred name of places, and we have recommendations for changes in this area as well. We support keeping the concept of official languages for places, but recommend removing some redundancy in the text and also making some implicit conditions more explicit.

Justification

Recording the names of corporate bodies and creating access points for corporate bodies in an international environment presents challenges for libraries. International corporate bodies may present their names in a variety of languages for a variety of purposes, so agencies recording the preferred name need guidance on which version to pick. In addition, libraries also have certain needs based on the languages and scripts used in their home countries and by their patrons. Both the original version of RDA and the current version provide language options for recording the preferred names of corporate bodies, but this working group feels that the current options under *Corporate Body: preferred name of corporate body. Names of corporate body in two or more languages* ([RDA 05.63.25.57](#)) are too restrictive and need to be more flexible to accommodate international practices, which are more varied than RDA allows. Options are currently tied to specific conditions which not only restrict the choices that agencies have but also make the instructions needlessly complicated.

For example, the option to record a preferred name in a language that is preferred by an agent who creates the metadata ([RDA 46.13.47.50](#)) is possible if the corporate body uses one language in its communications, regardless of the language used by the body. However, if the corporate body uses two or more languages, that option is possible only if a language used by the body is also a language preferred by the agent. The option is not offered if a language used by the body is not a language preferred by the agent or if the language or languages used by a body are unknown. We believe that this option should be also available in these situations. To give the maximum flexibility, then, we propose deleting all the conditions except one and grouping all the condition options under it.

The original text of RDA instructed agencies to choose the preferred name of a corporate body in “**the** official language” of the body ([11.2.2.5.2 RDA](#)) if the name of the body appears in more than one language. In the current RDA, under “[preferred name of corporate body](#)” language is now one of the criteria of corporate bodies (see <https://access.rdatoolkit.org/en-US ala-a64f060b-faf1-3a4b-8965-49526508438f>) and the text now says to record a value in “**an** official language” of the body ([RDA 17.17.66.97](#)). The use of the indefinite article in the current text of RDA does give agencies more freedom but is still based on the concept of an official language, which can be difficult to determine, especially with companies or non-governmental agencies. The languages of the body’s website are not necessarily the official languages of the body, since many bodies will use English or other international languages on their websites. To get the true official language or languages we would need to look at a body’s charter, which may not be easily available. In addition, the concept of a single official language may not be possible in certain multilingual countries where, due to patron expectation or even legal requirements, metadata must be created in the languages that are officially or commonly used within the country.

For these reasons, we believe that choosing a name in a language preferred by an agent who creates the metadata should be an option available in all circumstances. However, we also suggest that RDA should retain the option of choosing a name in a body’s official language. Using an organization's official language when that language is known ensures that the principle of representation is respected, and that the organization is named in the way it identifies itself. Retaining the official language option would also allow continuity with the instructions from the original Toolkit.

Regarding [Corporate Body: category of corporate body](#) and [Corporate Body: category of government](#), we think that the instructions offering the option to record a value in an official language of a corporate body or government pose no serious problem. In both of these sections the first option presented is to use a language preferred by an agent who creates the metadata ([RDA 79.10.10.15](#) and [RDA 13.60.72.08](#)), and we approve of the flexibility this allows. The condition option to record the value in an official language of the body or government is only

invoked when the value has “... no equivalent term ... in a language preferred by an agent who creates the metadata” ([RDA 83.87.47.23](#) and [RDA 45.55.16.02](#)) Again, we approve of the order of these two instructions, which prioritize a language preferred by an agent who creates the metadata above the official language of the body or government. However we do recommend adding a less specific option for cases when an official language cannot be determined.

Determining the official language for a place is less of a problem than for corporate bodies, since many reference sources, printed or online, provide this information. For that reason, we have no objection to retaining the concept of official language in the instructions for [Place: preferred name of place](#), particularly because the option stipulating the use of a name in an official language is only invoked if there is “No form of a name of place that is in general use is in a language preferred by an agent who creates the metadata” ([RDA 08.16.70.41](#)). We believe, however, that some instructions under “*Language*” in this section show some redundancy, while others have implicit conditions that should be made explicit. We therefore propose to revise the wording of this instruction in order to reduce repetition and increase clarity. We also propose to combine the last two conditions into a more general one to give more flexibility to agencies.

Impact

Acceptance of this proposal could add to more work for translators of RDA, since we are proposing the addition of a few more condition options to the text of RDA. Also, acceptance could create work for writers of policy statements since we propose giving more options to agencies in the recording of preferred names of corporate bodies and the writers of policy statements may want to include these options in their statements. We do not feel that other elements or guidance chapters will be affected by our proposed changes.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: For Corporate body: preferred name of corporate body, amend the text to delete some conditions.

Recommendation 2: For Corporate body: category of corporate body, amend the text to add a condition option.

Recommendation 3: For Corporate body: category of government, amend the text to add a condition option.

Recommendation 4: For Place: preferred name of place, amend the text under Language to

- a. Delete the first condition and condition option to reduce redundancy

- b. Add more conditions and condition options to make the instructions more explicit
- c. Revise the wording of some conditions options to improve consistency and clarity.
- d. Combine the last two conditions into a more general one

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Recommendation 1.

Corporate body: preferred name of corporate body. Recording. Recording an unstructured description. Names of corporate body in two or more languages ([RDA 05.63.25.57](#))

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CONDITION

A value of a name appears in two or more languages in manifestations.

~~A corporate body has only one value of Corporate Body: language of corporate body.~~

CONDITION OPTION

Record a value in an official language of a corporate body.

CONDITION OPTION

Record a value that appears most frequently in sources of information in a language that is preferred by an agent who creates the metadata.

~~CONDITION~~

~~A value of a name appears in two or more languages in manifestations.~~

~~A corporate body has two or more values of Corporate Body: language of corporate body.~~

~~A value of Corporate Body: language of corporate body is a language preferred by an agent who creates the metadata.~~

CONDITION OPTION

Record a value that is in a language that is preferred by an agent who creates the metadata.

~~CONDITION~~

~~A value of a name appears in two or more languages in manifestations.~~

~~A corporate body has two or more values of Corporate Body: language of corporate body.~~

~~A value of Corporate Body: language of corporate body is not a language preferred by an agent who creates the metadata.~~

CONDITION OPTION

Record a value that is in a language that appears most frequently in manifestations.

CONDITION OPTION

Record a value that is presented first in the first manifestation received by an agent who creates the metadata.

~~CONDITION~~

~~A value of a name appears in two or more languages in manifestations.~~

~~A corporate body has two or more values of Corporate Body: language of corporate body.~~

~~A value of Corporate Body: language of corporate body is not known.~~

~~CONDITION OPTION~~

~~Record a value that is in a language that appears most frequently in manifestations.~~

~~CONDITION OPTION~~

~~Record a value that is presented first in the first manifestation received by an agent who creates the metadata.~~

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CONDITION

A value of a name appears in two or more languages in manifestations.

CONDITION OPTION

Record a value in an official language of a corporate body.

CONDITION OPTION

Record a value that appears most frequently in sources of information in a language that is preferred by an agent who creates the metadata.

CONDITION OPTION

Record a value that is in a language that is preferred by an agent who creates the metadata.

CONDITION OPTION

Record a value that is in a language that appears most frequently in manifestations.

CONDITION OPTION

Record a value that is presented first in the first manifestation received by an agent who creates the metadata.

[Recommendation 2.](#)

Corporate Body: category of corporate body. Recording. Condition/Option 2 ([RDA 83.87.47.23](#))

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CONDITION

There is no equivalent term for a type of corporate body in a language preferred by an agent who creates the metadata.

CONDITION OPTION

Record a value in an official language of a corporate body.

CONDITION OPTION

Record a value in a language of a corporate body.

Clean copy

CONDITION

There is no equivalent term for a type of corporate body in a language preferred by an agent who creates the metadata.

CONDITION OPTION

Record a value in an official language of a corporate body.

CONDITION OPTION

Record a value in a language of a corporate body.

Recommendation 3.

Corporate Body: category of government. Recording. Condition/Option 2 ([RDA 45.55.16.02](#))

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CONDITION

There is no equivalent term for a category of government in a language preferred by an agent who creates the metadata.

CONDITION OPTION

Record a value in an official language of a government.

CONDITION OPTION

Record a value in a language of a government.

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CONDITION

There is no equivalent term for a category of government in a language preferred by an agent who creates the metadata.

CONDITION OPTION

Record a value in an official language of a government.

CONDITION OPTION

Record a value in a language of a government.

Recommendation 4.

Place: preferred name of place. Recording. Recording an unstructured description. Different names for the same place. Language ([RDA 84.02.77.60](#))

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~~CONDITION~~

~~A name of place is in two or more languages.~~

~~CONDITION OPTION~~

~~Record (in this order of preference):~~

- ~~1. the form of the name in a language preferred by the agent who creates the metadata, if there is one in general use~~
- ~~2. the form of the name in the official language of the jurisdiction in which the place is located.~~

CONDITION

A name of place is in two or more languages.

A value of a name is in a language that is preferred by an agent who creates the metadata and is in general use.

~~A name of place is in general use.~~

CONDITION OPTION

Record ~~the a~~ form of name in general use in a language that is preferred by an agent who creates the metadata. Determine the form of name from a gazetteer or another *source of information* published in ~~the a~~ language preferred by ~~the an~~ agent who creates the metadata.

CONDITION

A name of place is in two or more languages.

A value of a name is in a language that is preferred by an agent who creates the metadata.

A name of place is the name of a government that has jurisdiction over the place.

CONDITION OPTION

Record that form of name.

CONDITION

A name of place is in two or more languages.

No form of a name of place that is in general use is in a language preferred by ~~the~~ an agent ~~creating~~ who creates the metadata.

~~A jurisdiction has one official language.~~

CONDITION OPTION

Record ~~the~~ a form of name in ~~the~~ an official language of the jurisdiction in which the place is located. Determine the form of name from a gazetteer or another source of information published in the jurisdiction in which the place is located in an official language of that jurisdiction.

CONDITION

~~No form of a name of place that is in general use is in a language preferred by the~~ an agent ~~who creates the metadata.~~

~~A jurisdiction has two or more official languages.~~

CONDITION OPTION

Record the form of name that appears most frequently in sources in a language preferred by ~~the~~ an agent who creates the metadata.

Clean copy

CONDITION

A name of place is in two or more languages.

A value of a name is in a language that is preferred by an agent who creates the metadata and is in general use.

CONDITION OPTION

Record a form of name in general use in a language that is preferred by an agent who creates the metadata. Determine the form of name from a gazetteer or another *source of information* published in a language preferred by an agent who creates the metadata.

CONDITION

A name of place is in two or more languages.

A value of a name is in a language that is preferred by an agent who creates the metadata.

A name of place is the name of a government that has jurisdiction over the place.

CONDITION OPTION

Record that form of name.

CONDITION

A name of place is in two or more languages.

No form of a name of place that is in general use is in a language preferred by an agent who creates the metadata.

CONDITION OPTION

Record a form of name in an official language of the jurisdiction in which the place is located. Determine the form of name from a gazetteer or another *source of information* published in the jurisdiction in which the place is located in an official language of that jurisdiction.

CONDITION OPTION

Record the form of name that appears most frequently in sources in a language preferred by an agent who creates the metadata.