A rose by any other name?:
from
AACR2
to
Resource Description and Access

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Abstract:

Resource Description and Access (RDA) is a new standard for description and access, designed for the digital world. The paper charts the drivers that are shaping RDA's development. It explains why simply revising AACR2 is no longer an option. It discusses the relationship between RDA and other international standards developments, such as IFLA's draft statement of International Cataloguing Principles; the influence of models such as FRBR (Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records) and FRAR (Functional Requirements for Authority records). The timeline for the publication of RDA is outlined, and information given on how you can influence the development of RDA.

Introduction

The theme of this VALA conference, connecting with users, ties in perfectly with what is happening as the Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules (AACR2) are being re-developed. The key driver for the development of AACR2's successor, called Resource Description and Access or RDA for short, is the need to better serve both the users of the catalogue, and the users of the rules themselves. And, during the process of redevelopment, the Joint Steering Committee for the Revision of AACR (JSC) is connecting with both existing users of AACR2, and potential users of RDA, in new ways.

This paper will discuss the changes that are shaping RDA's development, from the shift to online publishing to changes in the way information professionals work. It will also explain why simply revising AACR2 is no longer an option. The paper takes you briefly through the relationship between RDA and other international library standards developments. And it places RDA in context with resource description standards from outside the library world. Information is given on how you can influence the development of RDA, and the process and timeframe for the publication of RDA is outlined.

AACR2 as it was then

A short history of AACR

AACR2 is now the most widely-used standard for descriptive cataloguing in the English-speaking world – and it has also been translated into 24 other languages.

AACR2 has its origins in codes developed back at least as far as the turn of the previous century. AACR was first published in 1967 in two separate editions for Britain and North America, and it took until 1978 for AACR2 to be published as a single edition[1]. Soon after, the standard began to be adopted by Australian libraries[2]. For over twenty years, AACR2 has been revised and maintained by the Joint Steering Committee for the Revision of AACR (JSC).

The AACR2 developed in 1978 has proven to be a fairly robust standard, adaptable to new types of material as they evolved. However, in recent years JSC has decided that continuing to simply revise AACR2 is not an option.

The information world of 1978

To appreciate the need for radical change it helps if you step back and consider what the information world was like when AACR2 was first published in 1978.

Card catalogues were still the order of the day, and OPACs (minus the graphical user interface) were just coming up on the horizon. Encoding standards were in their infancy: the MARC (MAchine Readable Cataloging) formats had only become an international standard five years previously, in 1973, but format integration was still a decade in the future (Cole 1993). Union catalogues were beginning to give way to shared databases. The Australian MARC Record Service had been launched, but ABN, the forerunner to Libraries Australia (formerly Kinetica), was still several years in the future (Our nation's album 2001). The Ohio College Library Center had just become OCLC the previous year, enabling libraries outside Ohio to become members (About OCLC 2005). And libraries all over the world were

grappling with new types of resources – but they were audio-visual not digital, and the world of the Internet was not yet dreamed of.

Towards a new edition of AACR2

So, as you can imagine, by 1997 AACR2 was beginning to show its age and it was realised that a plan was needed for its future development. In particular, there was a need to examine the underlying principles of AACR2 and evaluate the need for fundamental changes to the rules to resolve some underlying issues[3]. JSC drew together an international group of invited experts to discuss these issues at the International Conference on the Principles & Future Development of AACR in Toronto (The principles and future of AACR 1998).

From the recommendations of that meeting, a program of work was implemented, and in 2002 a new Strategic Plan was developed which built on AACR2's existing strengths (Joint Steering Committee for the revision of Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules 2004). This plan took AACR2 through a range of revisions, until around 2003-2004. Some issues, such as content versus carrier and the logical structure of AACR2 needed to be explored further, whereas others, for example changing the treatment of seriality, were implemented over this time.

In 2004 an Editor was engaged: Tom Delsey, well known for his work on the Functional Requirements of Bibliographic Records, (FRBR) and the Library of Congress' 'access level record'. Work then began on what was, at that stage, still being referred to as AACR3.

Changes in the information world

The new edition of AACR2 is intended to address the challenges of the new information age, including both the development of new media and the evolution of the catalogue and large databases.

New media

The organisation of AACR2 into chapters based on the 'class of material' to which an item belongs (e.g. chapter 5 Music, chapter 6 Sound recordings), has led to inconsistency in the application of rules for different media. More importantly, it has limited the extent to which AACR2 could be adapted to new media. The move to online publishing was a major challenge to a standard that is implicitly print-focused. The chapter on 'Computer files', later re-named 'Electronic resources', was largely restricted to data or programs, rather than multimedia resources or Internet resources. Data elements to facilitate the discovery of Internet resources were missing, as was assistance in describing resources that changed over time.

New catalogues

Evidence that AACR2 was developed for card catalogues remains in existing rules that are no longer appropriate, such as those that don't allow data to be repeated. With online catalogues, every data element is potentially available for searching. Large shared databases have also brought with them new problems, such as how to organise large result sets in ways that are meaningful to users. And, the user's expectations of the catalogue have changed.

Changes in the way information professionals work

There were also new demands from other stakeholders, resulting from the way that information professionals now work.

Cataloguers and Library educators

Cataloguers have also changed. There is increasing demand on them to be more productive, and to be able to handle a wider variety of material types. At the same time decreasing effort is spent in training them, both on the job, and as part of their qualifications. The existing rules do not serve them well as they can be complicated both to learn and to apply. AACR2 is very much like a rulebook, full of instructions on how to do things, but without a clear rationale for why it is done that way. This makes it hard to teach descriptive cataloguing, and for trained cataloguers to develop and exercise independent judgment.

Other resource description communities

One of the goals of the Strategic Plan is to extend use of the rules beyond the library community. However, the language and layout of AACR2 make it hard to use, and unlikely that the standard would be adopted more widely. If we wish other resource description communities to use AACR2 it needs to be easy to use and interpret, and to incorporate simple statements of the principles behind the rules. It also needs to be less print and book focused.

Library administrators

Even within the library community, library administrators also question the value of using a standard that is perceived to be unnecessarily complex, and they call for simplified metadata, especially for online resources. An example of this is the Library of Congress' development of the Metadata Object Description Schema (MODS: http://www.loc.gov/standards/mods/) and their 'access level record'.

What else is new? Other resource description standards

However, without clear principles behind changing AACR2, we could run the risk of throwing the baby out with the bathwater. Luckily, all this change has also been taking place in a context of some huge leaps in our understanding of information organisation.

Some of the key documents influencing the work on AACR2 have come from IFLA (International Federation of Library Associations) http://www.ifla.org/.

FRBR and FRAR

The first of these is FRBR (IFLA Study Group on the Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records 1998), which is a user-oriented conceptual model for the bibliographic universe. It allows the data recorded in bibliographic records to be related to the needs of the users of those records. It identifies bibliographic entities, their attributes and the relationships between them, and maps these to user tasks.

Its influence on the development of AACR2 includes influence on the structure and terminology of the rules, and a mapping of levels of description and access to FRBR user tasks. It also guides the choice, form and types of access points to be provided and the relationships to express.

In a similar way, the recently released FRAR (Functional Requirements for Authority records) (IFLA UBCIM Working Group on Functional Requirements and Numbering for Authority Records (FRANAR) 2005) is expected to influence the development of the new Part III on authority records. Like its counterpart, the focus of FRAR is on user needs and user tasks.

Statement of International Cataloguing Principles

Another significant development has been IFLA's 'Statement of International Cataloguing Principles'. This document is being drafted during successive meetings called the International Meetings of Experts for an International Cataloguing Code (IME-ICC). The third and most recent of these meetings will be held in Cairo, Egypt, in December 2005 (Tillett 2005). This document is intended to be a new and updated version of the Paris Principles, and is hoped to pave the way for an International Cataloguing Code.

Other resource description standards

AACR2 is also being developed with an awareness of resource description standards from outside the library world. These include the new or revised standards for archival description, such as the Canadian *Rules for Archival Description* (RAD) (Canadian Committee on Archival Description 1999-2003), and the US *Describing archives : a content standard* (Society of American Archivists 2004), as well as totally new standards such as *Cataloging Cultural Objects* (2005).

From AACR3 to RDA

The public reaction to distribution of a full first draft of Part I on Description in December of 2004 surprised JSC. In general there was support for the goals and direction of the revision. JSC expected and received some reactions to the effect of 'put it all back the way it was' or 'put back rule X (my favourite rule)'. However, there were also many comments, particularly from library managers, which were supportive of even greater change.

This willingness to support greater change led JSC to a re-think and a change of direction. Basically the aim now is to go further in revising the code, to optimise RDA as a web-based tool, to free RDA from the constraints of the ISBD (International Standard Bibliographic Description), and to better utilise the opportunities offered by aligning the code more closely with FRBR. To signify this change of direction, JSC agreed on a new working title for the code: *RDA: Resource Description and Access*. Resource Description and Access is a new standard for description and access designed for the digital world.

The key features of RDA

So what are the key features of RDA? JSC proposes that *Resource Description and Access* will have the following features:

The first key feature is that RDA will be designed as an online product for use in a Web environment. This will allow different views of the rules to be presented; for example to present a concise version of the rules, or rules of particular interest to, say, those cataloguing music.

The second key feature is that the structure will be aligned more directly with the FRBR and FRAR models. This more flexible framework will help address the challenges of describing digital resources. The data that is produced should also be more readily adaptable to newly emerging, more efficient, database structures.

The third key feature is that instructions for recording data will be presented independently of guidelines for data display. This will provide more flexibility, enabling the records to be used in a variety of online environments with different structures or syntax for data storage or display.

The final key feature is that RDA will contain clear general instructions, written in plain English. The instructions will be supplemented by detailed rules or by references to other standards as needed, and they will be backed by guidance on the principles behind the rules. This will enable the code to be used more readily beyond the library world.

Together these changes will pave the way for improved catalogue design and a greater user focus.

The structure and content of RDA

RDA will contain new introductions with background information about the purpose and scope of the code, clear statements of both the principles behind the rules and the functions of the catalogue, and information on, and links to, related standards and guidelines. Examples throughout the standard will also be updated and improved.

Part I Description
The proposed chapter headings for Part I are:

> Introduction
> General guidelines for resource description
> Identification of the resource
> Technical description
> Content description
> Sourcing information
> Item-specific information

Part I will still cover resource description, but it will be restructured. It will contain more consistent general rules that are applicable to all resources and which can accommodate new media and resources that have multiple characteristics. Description relating to technical details will be treated separately from description of the content. Concepts and terminology from FRBR will be introduced. You can also expect that there will be solutions to the residual problems associated with cataloguing resources that change over time.

The cataloguer will be guided through the various data elements to include in the description. At each step RDA will describe the purpose and scope of each element, where to look for that element and how to record it.

Part II Relationships

Part II of RDA will now focus on access points and relationships, and will start with an introductory chapter providing guidance on the objectives and principles. The proposed chapter headings for Part II are:

> Introduction to part II
> General guidelines on reflecting relationships
> Access points for persons, families, and corporate bodies associated with the resource
> Citations for related works, etc.
> Special instructions for particular types of works

The 'Relationships' referred to in the title of Part II are the relationships between the FRBR entities, that is related works, expressions, manifestations, and items, as well as persons, corporate bodies, and families that play some role with respect to the resource being described.

There are some terminology changes: for example 'primary access point' will replace 'main entry heading,' but the concept remains the same – i.e. the access point used as the initial element when you cite a work.

In recognition of the value of enabling the end-user to retrieve all the works of an author, any rules which limit the number of access points to be provided in some circumstances, that is, the so-called 'rule of three' will be dropped. There will continue to be an option to limit the number of access points for cost-saving reasons.

The concept of citations for works and expressions will replace that of uniform titles, and allow for identification of at least both those levels.

As with Part I, the aim will be to provide consistent general rules wherever possible, but it is likely that some special rules will be needed, for example for law, which has different standard citation practices.

Part III Access point control

A new Part III will be added covering the form of access points and authority control. Some of this is new territory for RDA, and RDA will provide much-needed guidelines.
As with the other Parts, it will have introductory material covering the principles of access point control.

> Introduction to part III
> General guidelines on access point control
> Names of persons
> Names of families
> Names of corporate bodies
> Names of places
> Citations for works, etc.
> Other information used in access point control

The instructions will cover the construction of authorized names for persons, corporate bodies, and families, and citations for works and expressions.

Appendices
Finally there will be the appendices. As well as the appendices listed, there will be a glossary and an index.

> Capitalization
> Numerals
> Initial articles
> Abbreviations
> Presentation of descriptive data
> Presentation of access point control data
> Comparative table of levels of description
> Comparative table of levels of access point control

Probably the most significant change here is the appendix on presentation of descriptive data. Now that RDA has separated the instructions on display from the rules themselves, ISBD display will be covered in an appendix. Importantly this will also allow the presentation of other types of displays, such as OPAC displays.

What this will mean for you
So, what do these changes mean for you, for the stakeholders in RDA?

In the process of rewriting AACR2, JSC is very conscious of the need to balance making the changes that are needed with the costs of implementing those changes. JSC's intention is to develop a new set of rules which are compatible with the old but which offer solutions for the future.

AACR2 and RDA records will be compatible and there won't be any need for libraries to convert AARC2 records into RDA records. Very little maintenance will be needed for existing records. The major changes seen when AACR2 was first released, for those who remember it, will not be repeated.

Cataloguers will need some new training. However, future training will be easier because the rules will be simpler, streamlined, and modernised.

Local documentation will need to be examined, and if still needed, rewritten. However, the resulting documentation should be simpler, and easier to maintain.

Influencing RDA's Development
During this key period of writing and revision, it has become especially important for both JSC and the Australian Committee on Cataloguing (ACOC) to receive input beyond their committee members and indeed beyond the cataloguing community.

JSC outreach

JSC's first step was to identify who the major stakeholders are. There is a tendency to think about cataloguers as the major (or only) stakeholders, then perhaps library administrators, but there are also many others:

> Library educators
> System developers
> Metadata (and other resource description) communities
> MARC format developers
> National and international programs (the Program for Cooperative Cataloging (PCC), the ISSN International Centre, IFLA, etc.)
> Other rule-making bodies (international and specialist)

JSC has mechanisms in place to consult with some of these stakeholders. JSC has been in close contact with IFLA's ISBD Review Group, and has shared both its intentions, and drafts of all the proposals with this group. JSC is also in close contact with the MARC community.

To date JSC has solicited and received feedback from rule makers in Spain, France, China, Russia, Germany, Italy, and Korea. JSC also solicited and received comments back from specialist communities who have either created their own cataloguing code or who have other cooperative agreements with JSC, such as AACCCM (Anglo-American Committee for the Cataloguing of Cartographic Materials) for cartographic materials, AMIA (Association of Moving Image Archivists) for AMIM (Archival Moving Image Materials: A Cataloging Manual) and the ISSN Centre. A number of members of programs such as PCC are also eligible for representation through ALA, and have provided comments through this channel. JSC also received some very useful comments from the Dublin Core community via the DC-libraries discussion list.

However, JSC has obviously just scratched the surface in soliciting feedback, particularly from other resource description communities and system developers, and JSC needs to do much more of this as it moves forward. A major task on JSC's agenda is to find better ways of reaching out to its stakeholders. One recent initiative was to set up an online discussion list, RDA-L, to facilitate informal discussion of RDA, details of which can be found on JSC Web site.

JSC also provides updates on its progress on the JSC Web site. In December 2005, an updated prospectus outlining the new approach was prepared to facilitate consultation with stakeholders. The latest draft of part I of RDA is also available on this site. Here are the Web addresses of both the JSC site (http://www.collectionscanada.ca/jsc/index.html) and the Prospectus (http://www.collectionscanada.ca/jsc/rdaprospectus.html). I encourage you to check these sites and stay involved in the discussions and the review of drafts that will be coming through.

ACOC outreach

ACOC too is looking at ways to reach out to its stakeholders. In August 2005, ACOC formed a Focus Group of interested volunteers with a range of different experiences, and familiarity with different formats and content types, to provide a broad perspective as we move towards RDA. The Focus Group includes front-line cataloguers, cataloguing managers and library educators from across the library sector. They will assist ACOC's three ALIA representatives (Ebe Kartus, Ann Huthwaite and Philip Hider) and its three National Library

of Australia representatives (Deirdre Kiorgaard, Julie Whiting and Rob Walls) to present the Australian point of view on RDA.

As time goes on ACOC will be looking at other ways of connecting with stakeholders, and of course, members of ACOC are always willing to speak to interested groups. The next opportunity to hear more about RDA will be at the forthcoming ACOC seminar, *Beyond the OPAC: future directions for Web-based catalogues,* which will be held as a pre-conference seminar to the ALIA biennial conference in Perth in September 2006.

In addition, any Australian librarian can have input to this process through any of the members of ACOC. Contact details for the member of ACOC can be found on the ACOC website: http://www.nla.gov.au/lis/stndrds/grps/acoc/acoc.html.

RDA timeline

What then is the process for the next stages of RDA development, and what is the timetable for publication?

Governance of RDA

As well as JSC there are two other bodies that oversee the development of AACR2 and now RDA. There is a Committee of Principals – the Directors (or their delegates) of the British Library, the Library of Congress, and Library and Archives Canada and from the UK, US and Canadian professional library associations. The other body is the co-publishers, who are the three associations acting as publishers[4]. Together these two bodies oversee the publication of AACR2, review the progress of JSC, and also manage the AACR Fund (which is the money generated by sales of AACR2 that supports the maintenance and development of the rules).

JSC itself is responsible for the content of the rules, and for their revision and maintenance. Until recently, JSC acted mostly on proposals from its own constituencies, that is the Australian Committee on Cataloguing, the Canadian Committee on Cataloguing, the American Library Association, the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals, the British Library, and the Library of Congress.

Process for revision

In October 2004, JSC met in Cambridge, England and agreed on the final update to AACR2. The 2005 update is the last set of revisions to AACR2 to be issued. During the period between 2005 and the publication of RDA, JSC will continue to collect rule revision proposals, and any such proposals will be considered by the editorial team for inclusion in RDA towards the end of the publication process.

The role of the constituencies, such as ACOC, has now changed in relation to the process of rule revision. Rather than reacting to proposals, JSC is now focused on writing a new standard. The greater part of JSC work will reverse the normal operations, in that the majority of the draft rule revisions will be coming from the editorial team and go out from JSC to the constituents for comments and information gathering. However, the decisions will be up to the editorial team.

Publication timeline

In recent years JSC has met twice yearly usually in April and October, and the timing of completed drafts reflects this meeting schedule. The timeline for the publication of RDA is:

July 2005:	First publication of the prospectus
Oct. 2005-April. 2006:	Completion of draft of part I, and constituency review
May 2006-Sept. 2006:	Completion of draft of part II, and constituency review
Oct. 2006-Apr. 2007:	Completion of draft of part III, and constituency review
May 2007-Sept. 2007:	Completion of General Introduction, Appendices, and Glossary
2008:	Publication of RDA

A process of review and re-drafting of successive parts will continue until December 2007 when JSC will be ready to send the final text to the publishers. If that deadline is met, then RDA will be available by mid 2008. If all goes well, the publication of RDA will coincide with the finalisation of IFLA's 'Statement of International Cataloguing Principles'.

Conclusion

As you can see, between now and 2008 there is a lot of work to be done to create RDA, Resource Description and Access. Your ideas and participation will be most welcome, in fact a vital part of the process of making RDA a new standard for description and access designed for the digital world.

Notes

[1] Formal cooperation towards an Anglo-American code began in 1904, but the early attempts to come up with a unified set of English language rules were unsuccessful. After agreement was reached on the 'Paris Principles,' at the IFLA conference of 1961, it looked like a unified Anglo-American Cataloguing code was a possibility. But again there were enough disagreements that separate versions were published in 1967. See the following document for more information: Joint Steering Committee for the Revision of AACR. *A brief History of AACR.* http://www.collectionscanada.ca/jsc/history.html. 'Last updated: 27 July 2005'. Viewed 6 September 2005.

[2] In 1981, the National library of Australia adopted AACR2, and from that time the Australian Committee on Cataloguing (ACOC) had a representative at the table of the JSC, the Joint Steering Committee for the Revision of AACR. Since 1986 ACOC has been a full member of JSC.

[3] The issues were addressed through nine papers: AACR2 and catalogue production technology; Access points for works; Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules, second edition: their history and principles; Beyond MARC; Bibliographic relationships; Content versus carrier; Issues related to seriality; The logical structure of AACR2; What is a work?

[4] See http://www.aacr2.org/governance.html

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