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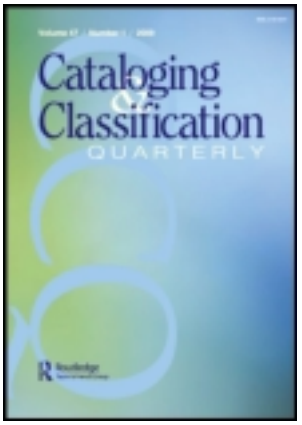

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Training for the U.S. RDA Test

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This article describes activities related to training for the 2010 test in the United States of the new descriptive cataloging standard Resource Description and Access *(RDA). The main focus is on activities carried out at the Library of Congress (LC) on behalf of all the participants and specifically for LC's participants. Lessons learned from these activities for future training are included.*

KEYWORDS *catalogers, descriptive cataloging,* Resource Description and Access *(RDA), training, cataloging standards*

INTRODUCTION

Deanna Marcum, Library of Congress' (LC's) Associate Librarian for Library Services, established the Library of Congress Working Group on the Future of Bibliographic Control in 2006 to advise LC on how bibliographic control will evolve and continue to serve libraries and library users. Two of the recommendations from the Working Group related to the library standards process: (1) to open the process to public scrutiny and participation and (2) to test standards prior to implementation.[1]

In April 2008, the Library of Congress, the National Agriculture Library, and the National Library of Medicine agreed that there would be a full test of the new cataloging standard *Resource Description and Access* (RDA) and that the three national libraries would make a joint implementation decision. The U.S. RDA Test Coordinating Committee, with co-chairs and representatives from the three libraries, met for the first time in June 2008. That committee began planning for the U.S. RDA Test by inviting other libraries to become involved in the testing process, developing evaluative

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factors, creating surveys, determining a timeline for the testing process, and so on.

RDA, developed by the Joint Steering Committee for Development of RDA, was released as part of the online *RDA Toolkit* in June 2010. That public release was the signal to begin the first of the phases of the U.S. RDA Test: July–September 2010 for local training and familiarity with the *RDA Toolkit*. The record-creation phase took place in October–December 2010. The Coordinating Committee began the data analysis phase in January 2011; the committee's report to the executives of the three national libraries was submitted in early May 2011. The implementation decision by those executives and the Coordinating Committee's public report were posted in June 2011.[2]

Responsibilities assumed by the Library of Congress were the preparation and presentation of RDA training materials, development of supporting documentation, and support for questions from the testers about RDA. Some test partners also provided training opportunities for their own testers.

PREPARATION FOR INITIAL RDA TRAINING

As part of a general orientation series for LC's staff in technical and public service divisions about developments occurring in bibliographic control, Barbara Tillett, Chief of the Policy and Standards Division, presented five programs in 2008–2010. The topics were an overview of RDA; the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) *International Cataloguing Principles*; the IFLA entity-relationship conceptual model Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records; the RDA changes from the *Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules*, 2nd edition (AACR2), for texts; and the implications of RDA and linked data for the future. The five presentations were recorded and posted as webcasts on LC's Web site.[3] Participants in the U.S. RDA Test were encouraged to watch these presentations in preparation for later training activities.

In the second half of 2009, policy specialists in LC's Policy and Standards Division (PSD) prepared documents for LC's testers related to choices offered by RDA: (1) additional core elements for LC beyond those identified as "core" and "core if" elements in RDA and (2) decisions on optional additions, optional omissions, and alternatives in RDA.

Those decisions were then recorded in *Library of Congress Policy Statements* (LCPSs) for the Test, the RDA counterparts to the AACR2 LCRIs (*Library of Congress Rule Interpretations*). Not all LCRIs were represented by comparable LCPSs; the reduction in the number of LCPSs was the result of recommendations from the Joint LC/PCC LCRI/RDA Task Group and the intention to emphasize "cataloger judgment" while testing various aspects of RDA. It was stated that LC would review its policy decisions if the decision would be to implement RDA.

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PSD created other documents in late 2009 that were updated during 2010 as more information became available and policies were refined:

- a listing of the elements in RDA;
- a listing of the controlled vocabularies in RDA;
- a table of the new fields and subfields in the MARC21 authority and bibliographic formats with LC's policies on their use in RDA records;
- a table of the RDA elements to be included in LC's RDA records (the table included identification of the elements as RDA core, RDA core if, or LC's additional core elements; identification of corresponding entities in the Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records [FRBR] and Functional Requirements for Authority Data [FRAD] models; and the MARC [Machine Readable Cataloging] tags for the elements).

The LC policy documents and supporting documentation were posted on a separate LC Web site "Library of Congress Documentation for the RDA (Resource Description and Access) Test."[4] They were freely available for the use of other Test participants who would be determining whether to follow LC's policies or develop their own local policies during the Test. The documents were also helpful for non-Test participants when RDA records began to appear in shared databases as of October 2010.

JANUARY 2010 TRAINING

The Coordinating Committee invited the Test participants to send one or two representatives to a one-day RDA training session in January 2010 in Boston, Massachusetts. Those representatives could then be key trainers for their colleagues. This training session was not mandatory and not all Test participants sent representatives.

Barbara Tillett and Judith Kuhagen presented the January 2010 training. Due to the time constraints, they made assumptions about the background of the attendees and limited or omitted the coverage of some aspects of RDA. They assumed that the attendees were familiar with AACR2 and used MARC21 as their encoding schema. The training focused on RDA core elements (including those that are core in certain situations), changes from AACR2 rules, and changes in the MARC authority and bibliographic formats. The content was divided into nine modules accompanied by exercises, answers, and supporting documentation. The files listed below were posted on LC's U.S. RDA Test Documentation site for the Test participants and others to use and/or modify; the modules were filmed that day and also posted on the site.

Training modules:

- module 1: What RDA Is and Isn't
- module 2: Structure

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- module 3: Description of Manifestations and Items
- module 4: Identifying Works, Expressions, and Manifestations
- module 5: Identifying Persons
- module 6: Identifying Families
- module 7: Identifying Corporate Bodies
- module 8: Relationships
- module 9: Review of Main Concepts, Changes, and so on

Supplementary documentation:

- interactive RDA terminology quiz
- exercises and answers
- controlled vocabularies
- "Where is it in RDA" (a general overview comparing AACR2 to RDA)
- listing of RDA elements
- listing of RDA core elements
- MARC21 encoding to accommodate RDA elements

JANUARY–JUNE 2010 ACTIVITIES

Between January and June 2010, PSD staff completed the LCPSs. The LCPSs were posted as PDFs on LC's U.S. RDA Test documentation site and sent to ALA Publishing to be included as a free resource in the *RDA Toolkit*.[5] PSD added folders of AACR2 versus RDA examples for various categories (e.g., preferred title for the work including compilations; publication, distribution, and/or manufacture statement; replacement of general material designation (GMD) and carrier description) to LC's documentation site. Two sample workflows were forwarded to ALA Publishing for inclusion in the *Toolkit* later in 2010 as examples of workflows that others could create or modify.

Some of LC's 50 catalogers who would be participants in the Test were named key trainers to assist PSD in identifying topics for LC's local training sessions and to create practice records. The January 2010 training modules were presented as a general overview. PSD staff met with them to discuss the practice records, to discuss the decisions in the LCPSs, and to get feedback on authority and bibliographic record templates to use during the July–September phase of the U.S. RDA Test. The LC key trainers reviewed the FRBR, etc., webcasts presented by Barbara Tillett and the ALA Publishing webinar on the *RDA Toolkit*. Both before and during the July–September phase, LC's testers created their practice records as Word files because a test database was not available due to development work in LC's integrated library system (ILS). The use of the production LC database for practice records had the potential to be confusing to LC's online public access catalog

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(OPAC) users and could have had an undesirable impact on LC's Cataloging Distribution Service.

TRAINING PHASE OF THE U.S. RDA TEST AT LC

The training of LC's testers generally took place from June–August 2010 because September each year is "production-only month," the end of LC's fiscal year. Because Beacher Wiggins, director of LC's Acquisitions and Bibliographic Access Directorate (ABA), wanted the ABA catalogers who were testers to have enough time for preparation and the development of RDA cataloger judgment, he ensured that they could be relieved from as many of their regular duties as possible during the period June–August.

These catalogers also reviewed Tillett's webcasts and the ALA Publishing webinar on the *RDA Toolkit*. In early June they attended two half-day classroom sessions; the January 2010 training materials had been updated and customized for LC's catalogers to include additional "LC core-plus" RDA elements, policy decisions in the LCPSs, and LC choices for alternatives and options. A separate day-long session was given for LC's testers from the Motion Picture, Broadcasting, and Recorded Sound Division located in Culpeper, Virginia. The revised training materials and supplementary documentation were also posted on LC's U.S. RDA Test Documentation site for the Test participants and others to use and/or modify.

Some of the LC testers were from divisions using AACR2 only for AACR2 headings in authority and bibliographic records and using other standards for descriptive cataloging (e.g., *Describing Archives: a Content Standard; Graphic Materials; Archival Moving Image Materials*). Their contributions to the Test were RDA authority data only.

After the classroom training was over and until the end of August, each LC tester was required to create two practice records a week for materials in that person's area of cataloging responsibility. The use of Word templates for the practice bibliographic and authority records allowed PSD staff to require the testers to add the RDA instruction number for each element in the record; this practice developed the testers' familiarity with RDA's structure/content and with the FRBR/FRAD entities.

The testers submitted those practice records to PSD for feedback each week. There were also required sessions so the testers could discuss their practice records with fellow testers and with PSD staff. The testers were grouped for these discussion sessions by categories of materials cataloged (e.g., books, serials, music, cartographic resources, microforms). Two all-day discussion sessions were also held in Culpeper for the testers working there. In addition to specific RDA instructions and LC policies, the discussions focused on developing cataloger judgment based on consideration of the FRBR user tasks (find, identify, select, and obtain). PSD did revise some of

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LC's policies for the Test based on reviewing and discussing the practice records.

In late September, there was a training session for all LC testers on both administrative aspects of the U.S. RDA Test (e.g., assignment of tester IDs, explanation of various surveys related to the background of each tester and records to be created during the October–December phase) and on technical support for the testers. Because the testers would be moving from creating practice records in Word templates to creating records in the ILS cataloging module, instructions for the use of record templates and macros were distributed. Files of the templates and macros were loaded on each tester's computer. Bibliographic record templates were created for different content/carrier combinations (e.g., books, maps, online serials, CD-ROM texts, DVDs) and for different authority records (person, family, corporate body, work, expression). Because one of the goals of RDA is to encourage the use of existing metadata, LC's existing add-on software for Online Information exchange (ONIX) data from a few publishers was modified for use by the two testers who would be creating RDA Cataloging-in-Publication (CIP) records. (Other LC add-on software for modification of records being downloaded for use by LC catalogers was not modified for the Test.)

IMPACT OF THE U.S. RDA TEST ON EXISTING BIBLIOGRAPHIC AND AUTHORITY RECORDS

Meanwhile, the U.S. RDA Test Coordinating Committee had been discussing with OCLC and the Program for Cooperative Cataloging (PCC) the impact of the Test on existing records in shared databases and authority files. Documents giving policy decisions of OCLC for bibliographic record creation and update[6] and of the PCC for authority record creation and update[7] were distributed to Test participants. These policies were announced on various cataloging lists so that non-Test participants would understand what they would be seeing in shared databases and in the LC/Name Authority Cooperative (NACO) Authority File. The impact of these decisions on LC's workflows was discussed with the LC testers. PSD answered questions from Test and non-Test participants who were also NACO participants.

TRAINING DURING THE RECORD-CREATION PHASE

Although the record-creation phase began on October 1, 2010, training activities at LC did not stop on that date. A new e-mail account,[8] LChelp4rda@loc.gov, was created so that Test participants and others both in the United States and outside the United States could write to PSD with

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questions about RDA instructions or about the RDA records that were being created. Some of those questions resulted in reminders to LC's testers or to all the Test participants. Some of those questions were included in a "Frequently Asked Questions" document added on LC's Test documentation site.

Classroom sessions for LC's testers during this phase focused on two topics: compilations and authority data. The wider scope of "compilations" in RDA and the differences between collaborative works and compilations continued to be a topic of discussion resulting in additional documentation and examples. Because PSD realized that not enough discussion of authority data had occurred during the July–August practice record discussions, PSD scheduled discussions on the new fields/subfields added to the MARC 21 Authority Format for RDA-related elements.

PSD provided daily feedback to LC testers and other Test participants after reviewing new RDA name and series authority records and the RDA-related elements being added to existing AACR2 name and series authority records. Some of the issues raised during this communication with testers were included in the reminders and in the FAQ mentioned earlier.

PSD also gave a briefing for LC's collection development and reference staff on changes they would be seeing in RDA records in LC's OPAC and in authority records in the LC/NACO Authority File. Some of those staff members had attended or viewed the RDA and FRBR webcasts.

TRAINING BY TEST PARTICIPANTS FOR THEIR GROUPS/INSTITUTIONS

Many of the Test participants used training materials and supporting documentation from the LC Test documentation site with some making revisions to represent local policy decisions and local situations. Some created documentation for RDA local policy decisions; others told their testers only to employ cataloger judgment during the Test rather than make policy decisions so soon. They viewed the RDA and FRBR webcasts. Some attended local and regional training sessions presented by various groups. Some created workflows and added them to the *RDA Toolkit*. They created practice records during the July–September 2010 phase of the Test, some in an encoding schema other than MARC. They used different methods of delivering training to their testers in recognition of different learning styles.

CONCLUSION: LESSONS LEARNED

Some of the lessons learned from preparing and presenting training materials and supporting documentation for the U.S. RDA Test relate to the testing of

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any library standard; others apply to the training for an implementation of RDA at LC and at other U.S. libraries.

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For Testing any Library Standard

Lesson: Do not do training on a standard if the standard is not available to the trainees.

The January 2010 training was scheduled so far ahead of the expected release of the *RDA Toolkit* to take advantage of many of the Test participants being in Boston for the American Library Association (ALA) Midwinter Meeting. Due to schedule constraints of classrooms and individuals and due to the uncertainty of when in June 2010 the Toolkit would be available, LC gave the classroom training sessions to the LC testers in early June before the Toolkit had been released to the public. Once the Toolkit was available, PSD should have presented guided hands-on sessions using the Toolkit rather than just advising the LC trainees to view the ALA Publishing webinars.

Lesson: Include some "known resources" or "known situations" when asking trainees to practice using the standard.

Asking LC's testers to create practice records for materials they usually cataloged was relevant for those individuals in the short term. But, selecting materials on a random basis did not ensure that the testers had exposure to the range of situations they would face in the long term. Also, PSD could not confirm that the testers would understand what to do when facing situations not represented by the resources the testers had selected for the practice records.

For an RDA Implementation

Lesson: Prepare training materials (including mappings) for all current encoding schemas.

Although the Coordinating Committee encouraged Test participants to contribute records in schemas other than MARC, training materials and supporting documentation (examples, etc.) were not provided for any schema other than MARC.

Lesson: Do not assume that all people who need to know about RDA are familiar with AACR2.

The testers at LC and in other institutions generally had years of experience with cataloging or using AACR2 records. An RDA implementation in any library will involve staff members who are not familiar with AACR2 now; that unfamiliarity with AACR2 will only increase in the future. People preparing training materials and supporting documentation should consider

AACR2-free materials or at least a parallel version of materials for those who have not cataloged using AACR2.

Lesson: Ensure that catalogers are aware that RDA does accommodate the creation of authorized access points for implementations of RDA requiring such access points.

The training materials for the RDA chapters for works/expressions, persons, families, and corporate bodies concentrated on the separate elements that identify the attributes of those entities; the statements in those materials giving the RDA instruction numbers for assembling some of those elements to create authorized access points were overlooked by some of the testers. Reorganizing the training materials to cover elements used in authorized access points before addressing the other identifying elements might be a better approach.

Lesson: Remember that copy cataloging or the re-use of existing metadata represents a significant percentage of cataloging activity in any U.S. library and is the only category of cataloging in many U.S. libraries.

The training materials for the Test were based on the premise that the testers would be creating new records. Guidelines or statements of "best practices" when using existing records/metadata are needed for efficient processing and for a consistent and predictable outcome in shared databases.

Lesson: Discuss and illustrate the possibilities of a linked data environment so that trainees see the benefits of RDA implementations other than those using current encoding schemas and current database configurations.

Presenting Test training materials that highlighted the differences from AACR2 with examples shown with MARC tagging sent the message to many that RDA was just tweaking AACR2 with what are perceived by many to be cosmetic changes. Using the context of AACR2/MARC may have been a "comfortable" approach for preparing for the U.S. RDA Test but it did not signal the changes RDA will foster in the bibliographic environment after comparable significant changes take place in the encoding of bibliographic/authority data and in the sharing of that data via new database structures and the Semantic Web.

NOTES

1. For more information on the LC Working Group on the Future of Bibliographic Control, see http://www.loc.gov/bibliographic-future/

2. For the text of the "Response of the Library of Congress, the National Agricultural Library, and the National Library of Medicine to the U.S. RDA Test Coordinating Committee" and the public report of the Coordinating Committee, see http://www.loc.gov/bibliographic-future/rda/

3. The presentations are available on LC's Web site: "Resource Description and Access: Background/Overview." Speaker: Barbara Tillett. Recorded May 14, 2008. Running time: 67 minutes. http://www.loc.gov/today/cyberlc/feature_wdesc.php?rec=4320; "Cataloging Principles and RDA: Resource Description and Access." Speaker: Barbara Tillett. Recorded June 10, 2008. Running time: 49 minutes. http://www.loc.gov/today/cyberlc/feature_wdesc.php?rec=4327; "FRBR: Things You Should Know but Were Afraid to Ask." Speaker: Barbara Tillett. Recorded March 4, 2009. Running time: 57 minutes.

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http://www.loc.gov/today/cyberlc/feature_wdesc.php?rec=4554; "RDA Changes from AACR2 for Texts." Speaker: Barbara B. Tillett. Recorded January 12, 2010. Running time: 75 minutes (41 minutes of presentation followed by Q&A). http://www.loc.gov/today/cyberlc/feature_wdesc.php?rec=4863; "RDA: Looking to the Future: Information Systems and Metadata." Speaker: Barbara Tillett. Recorded March 9, 2010. Running time: 54 minutes. http://www.loc.gov/today/cyberlc/feature_wdesc.php?rec=4967

4. All documentation related to RDA for the U.S. RDA Test can be found at http://www.loc.gov/catdir/cpso/RDAtest/rdatest.html

5. The LCPSs did not appear in the *RDA Toolkit* until October 6, 2010; a subscription to the Toolkit is not required for access to the LCPSs found on the Resources tab (http://access.rdatoolkit.org). For those users with subscriptions to the Toolkit, there are links between the RDA instructions and the LCPSs.

6. The policy statement on OCLC's Web site for the period of the U.S. RDA Test and the interim period until the three national libraries' decision would be announced is no longer available; the current policy is available at http://www.oclc.org/us/en/rda/policy.htm

7. The document "US RDA Test Policy for the Extra Set: Use of Existing Authority and Bibliographic Records" is available at http://www.loc.gov/catdir/cpso/RDAtest/rdatest.html

8. This e-mail account (LChelp4rda@loc.gov) remains available for questions about RDA and RDA records.

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