My grandfather taught me that only one person needed to worry about any one thing at a time. If you knew that someone else was obsessing over a problem, you could just put it out of your mind. For the last five years, administrators, reference librarians, and public services librarians have safely ignored Resource Description and Access (RDA), secure in the knowledge that technical services librarians have agonized over what this implementation will mean to our libraries. The time has come to share our burden with everyone.

How will RDA, the successor standard to the Anglo American Cataloging Rules, 2nd ed. (AACR2) for the 21st century, affect all the players?

RDA’s Effect upon Directors
RDA means end-users are able to find what they want more independently. Their libraries will be more “visible” in cyber-space because the integrated library system will be much more compatible with the internet, thus taking away some of the “fear factor” that libraries may become extinct. At the 2011 AALL Annual Meeting program, “RDA for Everyone: Resource Description and Access Explained to Non-Catalogers,” Caroline Young-Einaugler, reference and technology librarian at Rutgers University School of Law Library, stated, “RDA gives law librarians the opportunity to start thinking about their dream catalog!”

RDA’s Effect upon Reference and Public Service Librarians
Because RDA is an international initiative, it means more access to international and non-library based resources. RDA could make it easier for public service librarians to produce exciting bibliographies and research guides and afford more flexibility to accomplish research tasks, for example.

RDA’s Effect upon Catalogers and Technical Services
RDA means expanding our skillsets to meet the changing times and partnering with information technology departments. It also means educating other departments about the importance of correct metadata, authority control, thesauri, and tagging. Additionally, since RDA is an international initiative, information will be easier to share and access across larger bibliographic environments.

RDA’s Effect upon Information Technology Departments
For information technology, RDA means being more involved and connected with the technical services department specifically and with the library as a whole. Coordinating with the technical services department on metadata and tailoring the correct programming of an integrated library system for each library would become a necessity.

Although RDA appears to have the ultimate goal of creating machine-generated cataloging, the perfect end result will be a blending of information technology skills used to automate the routine steps in the cataloging process while the more intellectually challenging steps are reserved for the experienced technical services staff. Ultimately, this will create a more productive, efficient workflow for all.

RDA’s Effect upon Workflow
Workflows will be easier as time goes on; however, initially it will be very labor intensive to ensure future success. At the risk of wading into technical jargon, the single-sentence summary is that switching to the Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records (FRBR) (pronounced “Ferber”) model will allow the display of many versions/variations of a work on one bibliographical record.

RDA’s Effect upon the End User
RDA will be better for the end user because the information displayed will be easier for them to understand, and they will be able to find what they need faster. The interface will look and feel like other internet applications that end users are more comfortable using now.

For example, if the place and publisher are unknown, RDA will state that using natural language. Right now, we catalogers use the Latin abbreviations “S.l. : s.n.” to mean “no location : no name.” Times have changed, and the whole point of cataloging is to serve the end user. Therefore, RDA, if applied correctly, will increase the users’ ability to conduct research more quickly, efficiently, and independently.

In The Beginning
A timeline of development from Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules (AACR) to RDA is as follows:

- 1949—Seymour Lubetzky’s Cataloging Rules and Principles
- 1967—Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules (AACR)
What RDA Represents is Perhaps More Important than What It Is

So, what does the RDA represent? It represents a blueprint for the assembly of metadata (formerly bibliographic data) by computer programming and not by a human:

- **RDA started out as the Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules, 2nd Edition (AACR2)**

"Cataloging RDA: Resource Description & Access: Rules for the 20th Century," written by Karen Coyle and Diane Hillmann for the January/February 2007 issue of D-Lib Magazine, referred to the inadequacies of AACR2 (www.dlib.org/dlib/january07/coyle/01-coyle.html). But their article was actually a harsh criticism of RDA because, at the time the article was written, RDA appeared to be nothing more than a set of cataloging guidelines dressed up in AACR clothing. The authors felt that the profession had progressed very little from the early 1980s, writing, “Since the development of the first OPACs, libraries have been trying to move forward while dragging behind them the ball of a century of legacy data and the chain of an antiquated view of the bibliographic universe.”

A few months later, the formation of the Dublin Core Metadata Initiative (DCMI)/RDA Task Force, a collaborative effort aimed at developing an RDA Dublin Core Application Profile, radically changed the direction and development of the RDA guidelines. This collaboration helped legitimize the work of RDA, especially in the eyes of some of the non-library metadata communities, and made it much more likely that RDA will be useful in a semantic web or linked data context. Attracting the interest of metadata communities outside of the library profession is one of the goals of the RDA initiative and an important aspect for the future of libraries and library data.

The U.S. RDA Test Coordinating Committee called for a rewording of the RDA instructions in “clear, unambiguous, plain English.” The committee has set a timeline of 18 months for this project, beginning in July 2011. The completion of the re-write should coincide with the former RDA implementation date of January 2013.

Hillmann summarizes: “The present implementation of RDA in the static MARC record [is] a diversion from the ultimate goal of computer interoperability, thus taking the spotlight away from the questions on which we should be focusing.”

Another goal is to provide data elements in computer “actionable” ways:

- **XML—Extensible Markup Language**
- **SKOS—Simple Knowledge Organization System**
- **OWL—Web Ontology Language**
- **RDF—Resource Description Framework**

"Metadata that can be used and records do not need to be converted at this time"

The single most important political point to understand about the RDA might be that it is not about us, and by “us” we mean librarians and information professionals. It is about developing a structure for computers to generate metadata. In the interim, until that ultimate goal can be achieved, RDA is constructed in such a way as to give guidance to human beings in the task of using mark-up languages, such as MARC21 or Dublin Core, to communicate with a computer.

The general idea is that although MARC will continue to be around for a while longer, RDA implementation will be the beginning of development of a parallel computer language. In May 2011, LC announced the first step in a transition away from MARC with its Bibliographic Framework Transition Initiative (www.loc.gov/marc/transition). At the 2010 AALL Annual Meeting, Coyle and Hillmann spoke again about the real purpose of RDA. They urged three things to transform library information:

- More data and less text
- Metadata that is web friendly, such as XML or SKOS
- Metadata that can be used and revised by anyone (most of the work completed by data processing personnel, less by catalogers)
Examples of Discovery Platforms/Interfaces

- AquaBrowser
- Serials Solutions’ Summon
- Innovative Interfaces’ Encore
- Open source VuFind
- ExLibris’ Primo
- SirsiDynix’ Enterprise

RDA seeks to bridge the gap between the card catalog days when there was a very limited amount of space on the physical index-sized card versus our new ever-expanding digital era.

AACR2 is often referred to as “The Rules.” This nickname sums up the ideology of the rigidity of its content and, as Richard Amelung put it at the 2011 AALL Annual Meeting, “Because the rules were written in an isolated environment with 1980 objectives, AACR2 does not play well with others (and vice versa) in a new era.”

Remember, “The Rules” began in the 1960s, and much has changed since then. Along with this, Amelung points out that we should not be asking an international community to use an Anglo-American code.

The internet is a resource to connect different cultures and audiences. We can analogize the change from AACR2 to RDA to the evolution of listening to audio and video (from radios and record players to Blue-Ray and streaming video). Each time the formats change, there is some confusion, debate, skepticism, excitement, and frustration. But, ultimately, each step has usually enhanced our pleasure and experiences while taking us to higher levels of quality and imagination than before.

New Interface Approaches

The last broad concept we want to introduce comes from one of the true leaders in the technical services/automation world, Marshall Breeding, who wrote a monograph in 2010 titled, Next-gen Library Catalogs. In it, Breeding addresses the false notion that the advent of new applications called “discovery interfaces” cancels the need for good catalog records.

Far from it, Breeding writes: “The new products rely on metadata, whether in MARC or some other form, to create facets, as factors in relevancy ranking, and in many other ways not exploited in traditional catalogs. Many of these new interfaces attempt to make even more advanced use of metadata than traditional catalogs, especially in the ways they group and organize records. Concepts such as the FRBR have taken hold in discovery interfaces far beyond what was possible to accomplish in traditional online catalogs.”

“To the extent that these new interfaces approach metadata differently, there may be large implications for cataloging and authority control within the ILS and in the treatment of metadata in other repositories ingested into the discovery platform. Once exposed in this way, inconsistencies in metadata become conspicuous that were previously hidden. Especially in the generation of facets, any errors and inconsistencies stand out in full view that took a careful eye to discover in the online catalog.”

A Sampling of Changes in Future RDA Catalog Records

No more Latin abbreviations:
- S.l. [Sine loco] for “no location” or s.n. [Sine nomine] for “no name (publisher)”
- The new phraseology:
  - $a [Place of publication not identified]: $b [publisher not identified], $c 1966.
- Three new MARC fields to replace 245 $b:
  - 336 - Content Type (RDA 6.9)
    The form of communication through which a work is expressed. Examples: performed music, text, two-dimensional moving image
  - 337 - Media Type (RDA 3.2)
    The general type of intermediation device required to view, play, run, etc., the content of resource. Examples: audio, computer, microform, unmediated, video
  - 338 - Carrier Type (RDA 3.3)
    The format of the storage medium and housing of a carrier. Examples: audio disc, online resource, microfiche, videocassette, volume.
- Differences in approximate date of publication, distribution, etc.:
  - AACR2Rev.2002: [ca. 1960] [197-?] [18—] [not after Aug. 21, 1492]
  - RDA: [1960?] [between 1970 and 1979?] [between 1800 and 1899] [not after Aug. 21, 1492]

Putting RDA into Action

The FRBR Entities: Fundamental Requirements for Bibliographical Records:

- Work: Any version of a creative work (i.e., Mozart’s The Magic Flute)
- Expression: Where the work can be seen or heard or felt (i.e., score or performance recording)
- Manifestation: Exact contents are reproduced to look the same, even though the format is different (paper vs. microfilm vs. e-book)
- Item: Details of the specific item in hand (autographed, barcode number, volume count, missing volumes)

A new 264 field for additional publishing information.

Statement of responsibility: The rule of three is gone.

All authors can be listed.

Edition statement is spelled out in full:
- $a Second edition.

Publication, distribution, etc., is spelled out:

Copyright date is a separate element in RDA:
- It does not substitute for a publication date.

Differences in approximate date of publication, distribution, etc.:
Extent is spelled out in full:
$s xxiii, 554 pages: $b illustrations, map; $c 24 cm.

Series numbering will be spelled out:
$s Dictionary of literary biography; $v volume 68

Personal name headings:
- In RDA, terms indicating relationship such as “Jr.” are treated as part of the name: 100 1_ $a Williams, Hank, $c Jr., $d 1949.
- If the person was born in the same year as another person with the same name, record the date of birth in the form [year] [month] [day]. Record the month in the language and script preferred by the agency creating the data.
  - 100 1_ $a Smith, John, approximately 1837-1896
  - 100 1_ $a Smith, John, 1837-approximately 1896
  - 100 1_ $a Smith, John, approximately 1837-approximately 1896

In some cases the Library of Congress has already decided not to adopt particular RDA rules.
- LC practice: Use a hyphen after date of birth; do not use the term “born” with the date.
  - 100 1_ $a Smith, John, born 1825
  - LC practice: Smith, John, 1825-
- LC practice: Use a hyphen before the date of death; do not use the term “died” with the date.
  - 100 1_ $a Smith, John, died 1859
  - LC practice: Smith, John, -1859

Possible Problems
- ISBD punctuation will be optional, and its use will be noted in the fixed fields. Not using it will remove the built-in safeguard we have for fixing missing subfield indicators, as they are mostly duplicated by ISBD punctuation.
- Provider-neutral records are incompatible with the RDA. But, provider-neutral records are “illegal” now under AACR2 because we should be cataloging the item in hand. Yet we have created vendor-neutral records anyway. Vendor-neutral records are created based on the original print version, with modifications for an electronic reproduction. This is in direct violation of cataloging item in hand.
- There will be a huge impact on authority work because RDA will mostly use “what you see” on the item.
- One thing that librarians need to be conscious of is future compatibility. Libraries should be contacting their ILS vendor to inquire what it has done and is planning to do in terms of the new MARC fields and RDA.

Looking Ahead
Caroline Young-Einaugler, states, “With the right cataloging and ILS, virtually any field can be used to search, sort, display, and modify results. This is also a great opportunity for technical services and public services to work together to develop a catalog that works for each individual institution.”

So while the creation and changeover to RDA is a long and fairly daunting process, the goal is to make libraries more visible, accessible, and available to many more users. RDA would help accomplish this by allowing libraries to shift with the digital times and convert from older, previously well-suited technology. RDA could go a long way in abating the fear that libraries will disappear.

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