

Resource Description and Access (RDA)

The New Way to Say, "AACR2"



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Every segment of life has its familiar products. In the food world, most people have heard of Kool-Aid, French's Mustard, and Coke. With automobiles, the names Chevrolet, Toyota, and Ford easily come to mind. In the school library world, the Newbery Award, Scholastic, and AACR2 are well known nationwide. AACR2? How did that term make the school library's "familiar products" list?

For those readers who may not know, AACR2 stands for the Anglo-American Cataloging Rules, Second Edition. It is the cataloging code librarians across North America have been using since 1978. AACR2 is about to take on a new character and focus as the Resource Description and Access (RDA)—scheduled to be introduced in 2008. This development is a major change in the library community in general (and the school library community in

particular). A brief examination of the history of the creation of library cataloging code and use followed by the development and philosophy behind RDA may be helpful to provide context for RDA and its development.

The History of AACR Early history

According to "A brief history of AACR," produced by the Joint Steering Committee for the Revision of *Anglo-American Cataloging Rules, AACR2* and available at www.collectionscanada.ca/jsc/history.html, the *Anglo-American Cataloging Rules* began as the *Condensed Rules for an Author and Title Catalog*, originally published in an 1883 edition of *Library Journal*. This predecessor to AACR served as the catalyst behind an effort by the American Library Association (ALA) and the Library of Congress (LC) to combine ALA's cataloging rules with LC's plan to

introduce its printed catalog card program.

The result of combining the Condensed Rules and the LC card catalog project plans was the introduction of a comprehensive version of the ALA rules in 1902. The 1904 revision included portions of the cataloging rules developed by Cutter, the cocreator of the Cutter-Sanborn Tables, a combination of letters and numbers for arranging author names in some libraries. Although these attempts to create cataloging rules originated in the United States, similar cataloging rules development was underway across the Atlantic in the United Kingdom.

The 1883 introduction of *Cataloguing Rules by Great Britain's Library Association (LA)* was an early attempt to gather cataloging rules in western Europe. Similar in content

to Condensed Rules in the United States, the British Cataloguing Rules document was revised in 1902. This revision included contributions from both the American and British documents. The creation of this master document with content from both sides of the Atlantic was a harbinger of future American–European collaboration on cataloging standards.

America and Great Britain join forces

Because cataloging documentation efforts were occurring simultaneously, the American Library Association and the LA agreed to combine their efforts, creating international cataloging rules but publishing them in two editions—the American edition, known as the *Catalog Rules, Author and Title Entries*, and the British edition, the *Cataloguing Rules, Author and Title Entries*. These truly Anglo–American cataloging rulebooks contained a total of 174 entry rules for authors, titles, and associated descriptions (basic author, title, and physical descriptive details).

When the British government declined further involvement during the early days of World War II, the joint development of Anglo–American cataloging rules was briefly interrupted. This led to the ALA revision of *Catalog Rules, Author and Title Entries* that added 150 new rules, thus creating a complex, two-part, 324-rule document that included the new feature of authority cards. LC’s 1949 publication *Rules for Descriptive Cataloging in the Library of Congress* introduced distinct descriptive cataloging rules for different types of materials.

American–British cooperation in developing cataloging guidelines resumed in 1960 during the

International Conference on Cataloging Principles, held in Paris. At that meeting, an international panel created twelve basic cataloging principles. These “Paris Principles” became the basis for the first edition of the *Anglo–American Cataloging Rules* (AACR), created by the LC and groups from the ALA, the LA, and the Canadian Library Association. AACR was updated several times—the extensive revision published in 1978 forms the basis for the AACR2 we use today.

AACR developments in the late 1960s and 70s included the introduction of the International Standard Bibliographic Description (ISBD) in 1969, a revised AACR chapter 6 for monographs in 1974, and later revisions to the AACR chapter 12 (“AV and Special Instructional Materials”) and chapter 14 (“Sound Recordings”).

According to Barbara Tillett, chief of the Cataloging Policy and Support Office at the LC, the “Paris Principles”—the original AACR core philosophy—are now being reviewed and updated to reflect today’s Web environment. The result of the series of International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions’ Meetings of Experts on an International Cataloging Code will be the development of the Statement of International Cataloging Principles. The interim report issued by the committees was presented at ALA in July 2007. The prototype—www.rdaonline.org—is available with links to select draft chapters (Joint Steering Committee 2007).

Development of AACR2 and the vision of RDA

The original 1967 AACR was published

in two versions (North American and British), each divided into three parts:

1. Entry and heading
2. Description
3. Non-book materials

While this original AACR document reflected the joint development of cataloging rules from an international perspective, the fact that it was still being presented in two versions created inconsistencies. To rectify the discrepancies, a joint committee in 1978 produced and developed a truly international code in one document—AACR2.

Unlike its predecessor, AACR2 contained only two parts:

1. Description (now based on the General International Standard Bibliographic Description: Annotated Text—or ISBD(G))
2. Entry and heading

The LC, the National Library of Canada, the British Library, and the Australian National Library adopted AACR2 in 1981. The text was later revised in 1988, 1998, and 2002 to reflect changes in entry procedures and the development of new formats, particularly emerging formats such as electronic resources.

While AACR2 was intended to address cataloging in all formats, this “comprehensive view” of AACR2 has been debated. Ann Huthwaite, in her *AACR2 and Its Place in the Digital World: Near-Term Solutions and Long-Term Direction*, discusses the fact that the cataloging rules for some formats—particularly those that are electronic-based—may contain similar descriptive characteristics and thus be assigned to multiple chapters

in *AACR2* (Huthwaite 2000).

Additionally, these similarities are appearing in ways never experienced before. For example, prior to 1997, most documents were produced in print. If another format happened to be generated for the document, it was usually reproduced in a micro-based format (microfilm, microfiche, etc.). Today an original document may come as a portable document format (PDF) or coded in the extensible markup language (XML). When cataloging documents in these new formats, catalogers often find *AACR2* rules too specific and thus not easily adaptable to the cataloging requirements for these formats (Huthwaite, 2000).

RDA: From concept to reality

To meet these challenges, the Committee of Principles, an international body of representatives from library and research institutions, and the Joint Steering Committee for the Revision of Anglo-American Cataloging Rules, has developed *Resource Description and Access*, or *RDA*. The statement of purpose for *RDA* is as follows:

RDA—Resource Description and Access will be a new standard for resource description and access, designed for the digital world.

Built on foundations established by the Anglo-American Cataloging Rules (AACR), *RDA* will provide a comprehensive set of guidelines and instructions on resource description and access covering all types of content and media.

RDA will enable users of

library catalogues and other systems of information organization to find, identify, select, and obtain resources appropriate to their information needs. (Joint Steering Committee 2006)
[Query: There is no 2006 reference in the “Works Cited” section]

Structurally, *RDA* contains the following parts:

- Introductions (general principles and concepts)
- Part I—Description
- Part II—Relationships
- Part III—Authority control
- Appendices

An important part of *RDA* is its direct alignment with the *Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records (FRBR)* and *Functional Requirements for Authority Records (FRAR)* models (Please see the *Knowledge Quest* CE-cataloging column “FRBR: Cataloging’s Future is Closer than you Think!” for additional information (Adamich 2007). Other important features of *RDA* are its attempt to address ambiguous terminology, resolve problems related to identifying material classes (for instance, terms describing General Material Designators), eliminate inconsistencies in technical and content descriptions, and address the cataloging of digital resources, three-dimensional objects, visual materials, manuscripts, and archives more effectively.

An online tutorial reviewing *RDA*’s specifications and use will be accompanied by examples written in English, a glossary and references to important *RDA*-related definitions. Plans are underway to build

implementation activities, developed in cooperation with educators and cataloging training professionals worldwide. These activities are intended to support the integration of *RDA* structure and content into the cataloging workflow (Joint Steering Committee 2006).

[insert Sidebar about here]

RDA’s Impact on Cataloging in School Libraries

For the school library community, *RDA* will have a limited impact on the daily cataloging and processing of materials entering school libraries, as, in most cases, teacher-librarians modify existing cataloging records created by bibliographic utilities, materials publishers, and other bibliographic record vendors. But the connection of *RDA* to the *FRBR* model and its use of a hierarchical structure—using the “work” level (for instance, uniform titles) to link different “manifestations” (for instance, formats) to that master “work” level—will affect how school library catalogs will be organized and accessed in the future.

Another important impact of *RDA* will be the cataloging of a new group of library resources, including streaming videos and online document formats (PDF, XML, etc.). Furthermore, while school libraries will continue to use the MARC (Machine Readable Cataloging) standard for the foreseeable future, the use of other bibliographic standards (including the Dublin Core and GEM metadata standards; for additional information see the Adamich’s *Knowledge Quest* CE-cataloging column “Curriculum-based Cataloging and the New Metadata: Cataloging Beyond the World of MARC”) will become

more widespread as school libraries join other libraries worldwide in presenting information describing library holdings in places beyond the scope of the traditional “library catalog”—including Web sites, data records, and other documents.

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Two sample sections provide some insight into the future of cataloging rules using RDA:

1.1.2. MODE OF ISSUANCE

Certain guidelines and instructions in part I refer specifically to resources issued in a particular manner.

- The term **resource issued as a single unit** refers to a resource that is issued either as a single physical unit (e.g., as a single-volume monograph) or, in the case of an intangible resource, as a single logical unit (e.g., as a PDF file mounted on the Web).
- The term **resource issued in two or more parts simultaneously** refers to a resource comprising two or more physical units (e.g., two videocassettes issued as a set) or, in the case of an intangible resource, two or more logical units (e.g., a Web site comprising two or more distinct sub-sites).
- The term **resource issued in successive parts** refers to a resource that is issued in a succession of discrete parts. The parts may be physically discrete (e.g., the issues of a printed magazine) or, in the case of an intangible resource, they may be logically discrete parts that are issued in succession and remain as discrete parts (e.g., the monthly issues of an electronic journal).
- The term **integrating resource** refers to a resource that is added to or changed by means of updates that do not remain discrete and are integrated into the whole. An integrating resource may be tangible (e.g., a loose-leaf manual that is updated by means of replacement pages) or intangible (e.g., a Web site that is updated either continuously or on a cyclical basis).

1.1.3. INTENDED TERMINATION

Resources issued in two or more parts (either simultaneously or successively) may also be referred to using terms that reflect a distinction between those that are to be completed within a finite number of parts and those that are to be issued over time with no predetermined conclusion.

- The term **multipart monograph** refers to a resource issued in two or more parts that is complete or intended to be completed within a finite number of parts.
- The term **serial** refers to a resource issued in successive parts that has no predetermined conclusion (e.g., a periodical, a series of annual reports, or a newspaper).

1.1.4. COMPREHENSIVE, ANALYTICAL, AND MULTILEVEL DESCRIPTION

A number of the guidelines and instructions in part I refer to specific ways of describing a resource.

- The term **comprehensive description** refers to a description that describes the resource as a whole (e.g., a kit comprising a filmstrip, an audiotape, and a teacher's manual, or a collection of posters assembled by a library).

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1.4. MANDATORY ELEMENTS OF DESCRIPTION

Chapters 2–6 provide guidelines and instructions on a comprehensive set of elements covering the description of all types of resources. The following is a list of mandatory elements

that reflect attributes of the entities *work*, *expression*, and *manifestation* designated in FRBR as basic requirements for the purposes of identifying those entities.

- Title proper
- Earlier/later variations in the title proper
- Statement of responsibility (person, family, or corporate body with principal responsibility)
- Edition statement
- Numbering
- Publisher, distributor, etc. (if more than one then only the first recorded)
- Date of publication, distribution, etc.
- Title proper of series
- Numbering within series
- Resource identifier
- Form of carrier
- Extent
- Scale of cartographic content

- Coordinates of cartographic content
- When describing a resource, include as a minimum all the elements listed above that are applicable to that resource.
 - *Optionally*, provide a controlled access point (see chapters 11–16) in lieu of the mandatory statement of responsibility.
- Include any additional elements that are required to identify the resource (i.e., to differentiate the resource from one or more other resources bearing similar identifying information).
- When describing a resource more fully, include additional elements in accordance with the policy of the agency preparing the description, or as judged appropriate by the cataloguer. (RDA, 2005)

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Additional Update Information

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