

## OFFICIAL OR ORIGINAL: IMPLEMENTING RESOURCE DESCRIPTION AND ACCESS (RDA) IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES AFTER THE 3R PROJECT

**Mark Anthony A. Santos**

*Assistant Professor*

*School of Library and Information Studies*

*University of the Philippines*

*Quezon City, Philippines*

*mark@slis.upd.edu.ph*

### ABSTRACT

Since 2010, Resource Description and Access (RDA) has been used by many libraries around the world for the description of information resources. As of May 2021, two versions of RDA are available for use: the “original” and the “official” versions. With the release of the “official” version of RDA on December 15, 2020, libraries currently utilizing RDA will be expected to undergo the necessary preparations to transition to the “official” version of RDA. Implementation dates of the “official” version of RDA is up to the libraries and communities, as recommended by the RDA Steering Committee. While the “original” version of RDA will still be available during this transition period, eventually it will no longer be accessible interactively. This paper presents a brief overview of the status of implementation of RDA and recommendations for transition to the “official” version of RDA.

This paper presents a brief overview of the current status of implementation of RDA and recommendations for transition to the “official” version.

RDA is considered an international standard for the creation of metadata representing information resources (“About RDA”, 2020; “What is RDA”, n.d.). It was intended to replace Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules (AACR) for descriptive cataloging in various information agencies, such as academic libraries. Since its release in 2010, RDA has been used by many libraries around the world. According to Hennelly (2016), RDA has over 8,800 users in 64 countries across the six continents in 2015. It is currently available in eight languages, including Chinese, French, and Spanish. Translations in other languages are expected, which can further increase its adoption in other countries.

The interface of the RDA Toolkit should be familiar to most users who have been utilizing it for the past years. Users of RDA Toolkit, however, would notice a slight difference in the said interface when accessing it nowadays. Firstly, the said interface is no longer accessible through its former URL. Secondly, it provides a link to the “Official RDA Toolkit” at its header. This is because the interface is for the original RDA Toolkit. So, why are there two versions of RDA at present – the original and the official?

In December 2016, the RDA Restructure and Redesign Project (or 3R Project) was announced. Some of the goals of the said major project include the editing of RDA to bring it into alignment with the IFLA Library Reference Model (IFLA LRM). This is the

consolidation of the 3 FR models used for the development of the original RDA, namely FRBR, FRAD, and FRSAD (“RDA Toolkit switchover”, 2020). With the start of the 3R Project in April 2017, the content of the then official RDA Toolkit was frozen.

The beta site of the (would be) new RDA Toolkit was launched in June 2018. Then, on December 15, 2020, the beta site became the official RDA Toolkit (“What you should know about the December switchover”, 2020). This marked the formal end of the 3R Project. As stated by the RDA Steering Committee, “RDA has now incorporated the terminology, concepts, and approaches associated with linked data, although it can be used in a number of different implementation scenarios” (“RDA Toolkit switchover”, 2020, p. 2). In addition, the new RDA is not a cataloging manual (unlike AACR2), and “is no longer exclusively rooted in Anglo-American traditions” (“RDA Toolkit switchover”, 2020, p. 2), furthering its potential for worldwide implementation.

Considering this latest development in RDA, what should libraries do with their bibliographic records which were created using the original RDA? Are libraries expected to use the official RDA immediately?

While the new RDA has been released, it does not mean that it is to be implemented in all information agencies such as libraries right away. The RDA Steering Committee stated that when the switchover was done, it does not mean that implementation should immediately follow (“RDA Toolkit switchover”, 2020). The implementation date will depend on the readiness of the institution. During this transition period, the original RDA can still be accessed by subscribers of the Toolkit.

Does this mean that libraries can continue using the original RDA and decide not to transition to the official RDA at all? According to the RDA Steering Committee, the original RDA “will not be available interactively forever” (“RDA Toolkit switchover”, 2020, p. 1). With that said, libraries must prepare for the eventual transition to the new RDA. One might remember their own experiences in transitioning to RDA from AACR2 or other standard and the difficulties they faced as they undergo such task in their respective institutions.

One strategy to lessen the difficulty of transitioning to the official RDA is to learn from past experiences on RDA implementation. Available literature on RDA implementation present strategies for various settings, whether applied to individual university libraries or at the national level. Similar to the implementation of RDA during the first few years since its release in 2010, a new round of training programs for catalogers will definitely be part of implementation plans. Aside from formulating an implementation plan, Perez-Lizano (2016) noted the importance of establishing a task group that includes frontline staff aside from catalogers. She noted that everyone in the library staff, including non-catalogers, must be aware of any plan to adopt a new standard for the description of information resources, as other members of the library staff may have some ideas on how to adopt the new RDA for their institution.

As libraries prepare for transition to the official RDA, the RDA Steering Committee encourages libraries to begin familiarizing with the new official RDA as soon as possible. Like how helpful basic knowledge on FRBR is in understanding the then-official RDA, Kate James (“6 tips for teaching the new RDA Toolkit”, 2021), one of the instructors for

the RDA Lab Series of the American Library Association, recommended to acquire basic knowledge of the IFLA LRM in preparation for learning about the new RDA. However, she emphasized that instructors should not overdo the explanation of IFLA LRM on trainings for the new RDA, as “some people may confuse LRM and RDA” (para. 9).

To end, I would like to emphasize that libraries must readily adapt to the changing environment of information organization. While further improving systems and processes for metadata creation and information retrieval in our libraries is a daunting task and will require a lot of time and resources, let us not forget that we are doing it for the benefit of our clients. If we can institute ways to make information resources retrievable in a more efficient method, then such difficult endeavor is worth the effort.

## REFERENCES

- 6 tips for teaching the new RDA Toolkit. (2021, March 24). Retrieved from <https://www.rdatoolkit.org/node/243>
- About RDA. (2020). Retrieved from <http://rda-rsc.org/content/about-rda>
- Hennelly, J. (2016, September 23). Is RDA a global standard? Usage, translation, and governance as indicators. *American Libraries*. Retrieved from <https://americanlibrariesmagazine.org/2016/09/23/rda-global-standard/>
- Perez-Lizano, E. (2016). Implementing resource, description, and access in a time of change in the small academic library. *Technical Services Quarterly*, 33(4), 353–370. doi:10.1080/07317131.2016.1203640
- Purpose statement. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.rdatoolkit.org/sites/default/files/2019-11/Purpose%20Statement.pdf>
- RDA Toolkit switchover: Beta toolkit becomes official RDA. (2020). Retrieved from <http://www.rda-rsc.org/sites/all/files/RSC-Papers-2020-1.pdf>
- What is RDA? (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.rdatoolkit.org/sites/default/files/2019-11/What%20is%20RDA.pdf>
- What you should know about the December switchover. (2020 November 18). Retrieved from <https://www.rdatoolkit.org/index.php/node/230>