
Neue Formen der Erschließung

RDA implementation and application: British Library

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Summary:

The British Library implemented the new international cataloguing standard RDA in April 2013. The paper describes the reasons for the change, the project organization, the necessary adaptations to the systems and the training programs. Altogether, 227 staff were trained. Productivity levels by now are comparable with the levels for AACR2. However, there was a tendency to spend too much time on authority control.

Zusammenfassung:

Die British Library hat den neuen internationalen Katalogisierungsstandard RDA im April 2013 eingeführt. Der Beitrag beschreibt die Gründe für den Umstieg, die Projektorganisation, die notwendigen Anpassungen bei den Systemen und die Schulungsmaßnahmen. Insgesamt 227 Mitarbeiter/innen wurden geschult. Mittlerweile wird eine vergleichbare Produktivität erreicht wie unter AACR2. Jedoch bestand eine Tendenz, zu viel Aufwand in die Normdatenarbeit zu stecken.

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1. Introduction

The British Library formally implemented the new international cataloguing standard RDA (Resource Description and Access) on 1st April, 2013. This article, presented in a shorted version at Bibliothekartag 103, Bremen, gives an overview of our experience of implementation and subsequent application of RDA.

2. Context

The British Library is the National Library of the United Kingdom. It is a legal deposit library, responsible for preserving the national printed archive. The following table¹ summarises the Library's annual intake of published resources:

Type	Total	Legal Deposit
Monographs	184,921	122,873
Serials	78,317	35,516
E-media	39,605	0

1 British Library: Annual report and accounts. 2012/13, p. 19.
<http://www.bl.uk/aboutus/annrep/2012to2013/annualreport201213.pdf> (12.10.2014).

In addition to Legal Deposit, the Library acquires resources by purchase, exchange and donation. In April 2013 new regulations extended the scope of Legal Deposit to non-print media, including electronic resources.

The Library has two main sites, located 200 miles apart, in London and West Yorkshire. The Library employs approximately 1500 staff.² The main processing teams are based in Boston Spa, but many specialist staff in London also process collection items.



The British Library in Boston Spa (left) and at St. Pancras (right). Photos: Copyright © The British Library Board

Prior to RDA, the Library used AACR2 for cataloguing published resources; supplemented by DCRM(B) and DCRM(C) (Descriptive Cataloging of Rare Materials for Books and Cartographic Materials, respectively) for specialist collections. Archival and manuscript materials are in a separate content stream that follows archival standards, so were out of scope for our implementation of RDA. Sound recordings and Chinese and Japanese collections were also out of scope for the initial implementation.

From the early 1990s, the Library's cataloguing strategy has been based on deriving or reusing catalogue records, consequently the metadata standards used in our main content streams are closely aligned with Library of Congress.

3. Business Case

The Library is a partner in the development of RDA. The development of RDA is intended to satisfy

² British Library: Annual report and accounts. 2012/13 (cf. note 1), p. 76.

short term and long term requirements. In the short term, RDA is superior to AACR2 with regard to description of non-print resources. RDA enhances access to all types of resources by providing comprehensive instructions for authority control and relationships. In the longer term, RDA is one strand of a strategy to update the infrastructure and enable libraries to exploit the potential of Web technology to expose the content of their collections.

It was estimated that RDA implementation would result in a shortfall of 20-25,000 items on the processing key performance indicator (KPI). This was mitigated by pushing more material through the process, before training started, and by additional outsourcing.

We estimated that the annual cost of licensing the online version of the new standard, the so-called "RDA Toolkit", is greater than the annualised cost of replacing printed AACR2 every five to seven years. We mitigate the cost, as much as possible, by taking advantage of deals offered by the publisher (two for the price of one). A report available via the Toolkit enables subscribers to monitor the number of concurrent users and maximise the value for money from each license.

4. Project Organization

Expert groups were set up, drawn from experienced cataloguers and team leaders to provide the vanguard of trainers and practitioners in Boston Spa and St. Pancras. A coordinator was appointed to manage the implementation project. Although we eventually set a target date of 1/4/2013 for implementation, it was never conceived of as a „big bang“. RDA was phased in gradually by adding capability to systems and by increasing the number of staff working in RDA over the course of 2012-13.

The significant milestones included: import of RDA records for derived cataloguing and contribution of RDA name authority records to the Name Authority Cooperative Programme (NACO), from March 2012; redistribution of derived RDA records to customers from June, 2012; transition to RDA by the library supplier Bibliographic Data Services Limited (BDS), our Cataloguing-in-Publication provider, in January 2013, and the delivery of cataloguer training during the first quarter of 2013.

5. Systems

We created an RDA environment in the Aleph Library Management System (LMS), to test configuration changes and allow the expert groups to practice without affecting the production database.

The Library is able to make these changes directly in the Aleph Tables, without involving Ex Libris. All of these changes are documented and have been made available externally.³ Templates and macros, including those used by staff in selection and acquisition teams, were reviewed and updated. We also adapted the validation and automated match & merge processes so that mixed files of AACR2 and RDA records could be processed.

3 British Library: Cataloguing standards. <http://www.bl.uk/bibliographic/catstandards.html#rda> (12.10.2014).

In contrast to these back office systems, there was very little change to „Explore the British Library“, our implementation of the PRIMO discovery layer. It is a hybrid environment and effective FRBR-ization is dependent on retrospective data enhancement. A key project, which has just started, is to assign content types (e.g., „text“, „performed music“, „two-dimensional moving image“), media types (e.g., „audio“, „video“, „computer“) and carrier types (e.g., „volume“, „audio disc“, „computer disc“) to all the legacy data. These three elements are RDA's way of giving basic information about content and carrier of the resources, and can, for example, be used in faceted browsing.

6. Training

Training was the most intensive aspect of implementation. We developed different plans to meet needs of different groups of staff.

- RDA Trainers: These received training in how to deliver training. They also received introductory training in RDA based on the training modules developed by Library of Congress.⁴ They were given the time and encouragement to go and practice and to come back with questions and issues, which we would then try to resolve and feedback into the training materials.
- Processing staff: Selectors, acquisitions staff, copy cataloguers, finishers and shelf markers received job focused training. Training was mainly delivered in the team setting, with a couple of classroom sessions. The managers of these teams received the cataloguer training.
- Cataloguers: The training plan for cataloguers was more complex. Awareness and understanding of FRBR and RDA had been fostered through our Continuing professional development (CPD) programme while RDA was being developed. Refresher sessions were delivered before training got underway.

Training was delivered to teams in a classroom setting, by members of the expert groups, usually including the team manager. Everyone received six modules based on Library of Congress training materials. Generally speaking, a module was delivered in the morning and the team practiced what they had learned in the afternoon. When all the modules had been delivered, the team started cataloguing using RDA. During this familiarisation period, work was reviewed and the complexity of resources distributed for cataloguing was gradually increased. As the cataloguer gained confidence, the level of review was scaled down. The review period generally lasted 1-2 weeks.

Specialist staff received additional modules, but all cataloguers received the same basic training. Teams were also offered the option of attending „FRBR for the terrified“ and RIMMF (RDA in Many Metadata Formats)⁵ sessions, which looked forward to future application of RDA in a world without MARC.

In total, 227 staff were trained at the British Library (121 cataloguers and 106 processing staff); which amounted to 951 days, or 4.5 Full Time Equivalent staff.

4 Resource Description & Access training materials.

<http://www.loc.gov/catworkshop/RDA%20training%20materials/index.html> (12.10.2014).

5 RIMMF2. <http://www.marcofquality.com/wiki/rimmf/doku.php> (12.10.2014). RIMMF is a tool for visualising RDA data outside the MARC environment, thereby helping to develop a deeper understanding for the underlying, FRBR-based structures of RDA.

7. Documentation

Training was supplemented by comprehensive review and revision of existing documentation. Our application decisions and policies were documented in workflows. The workflows also act as a mediation layer that guides cataloguers through the record creation workflow for different content streams. Creating and maintaining the workflows is an overhead, but they have reinforced training and continue to be heavily used. British Library workflows have been published in the RDA Toolkit⁶ for the wider community.

8. Application

Cataloguers on the whole (tell me that they) like RDA and appreciate what it is trying to do. On balance there have been very few issues since we implemented RDA. Productivity levels are comparable with the levels for AACR2. The cataloguing daily rate in October 2012 was 10.66; in October 2013 it was 10.41. The daily rate for copy cataloguers in October 2012 was 39.02, in October 2013 it was 39.09.

The main issue has been around authority control. We have a „team“ authority control measure which was 20% prior to implementation, but has now climbed to 33%. This means in effect, that staff who carried out authority control work on behalf of colleagues spent one day a week on this before RDA, but after implementation this rose to nearly two days a week.

Investigation showed that in the absence of AACR2's arbitrary rule of three (i.e., for a collaborative work, only up to three authors were given entries), cataloguers were creating more access points, therefore more time was being taken up by authority control for specific types of resource, particularly conference proceedings and compilations.

We have introduced local policies to limit the number of authorised access points assigned to these types of resources. We hope that clarifications the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek (DNB) proposed for RDA 0.6⁷ will also help staff to develop their judgement: Prior to these clarifications, many cataloguers had wrongly assumed that, for a number of elements like e.g. „place of publication“, RDA stipulated either recording only the first one or all of them. But it now has been made clear that a middle way of recording some, but not all, is also possible.

9. Conclusion

In conclusion, we have implemented RDA, but there is a much bigger challenge ahead as we consider how to implement FRBR to take advantage of RDA's full potential.

6 RDA Toolkit. <http://www.rdatoolkit.org/> (12.10.2014).

7 Proposal 6JSC/DNB/3: Attributes of manifestations: Instructions for more than one instance of an element. <http://www.rda-jsc.org/working2.html#dnb-3> (12.10.2014).