

# **AWARENESS, KNOWLEDGE AND IMPLEMENTATION OF RDA IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES IN NIGERIA**

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## INTRODUCTION

This paper presents the report of a survey of the levels of awareness, knowledge and implementation of RDA in academic libraries in Nigeria. RDA, Resource Description and Access, is a product of the enormous developments in information technology that led to changes in cataloguing rules, principles, standards and library catalogues (Atilgan, Ozel and Cakmak, 2015). RDA is a standard for descriptive cataloging that provides instructions and guidelines on formulation of bibliographic data. RDA can be described as a new cataloging standard in the digital environment that replaces the Anglo American Cataloguing Rules (AACR2) to provide guidelines for listing bibliographic resources more functionally, defining information resources in all formats, sharing metadata in digital environment, and for the integration of libraries with the Semantic Web. It was published in 2010 as an online toolkit but also printed in hardcopy, and subsequently as an e-book. It is a user-centric platform formulated by libraries and information technologists to help users to be able to identify information resources by creating inter-related metadata in digital environment. It also assists libraries to keep in touch with semantic web and encourages international collaborations.

The topic of RDA was first presented to Nigerian cataloguers in October 2010. Dr. Ibidapo Oketunji presented a brief introduction to the subject during the 30<sup>th</sup> Annual Workshop/Seminar of the Nigerian Library Association/Cataloguing, Classification and Indexing Section held at Akure, Ondo State, Nigeria. Relying much on his experience in the United Kingdom, Dr. Oketunji explained some of the differences between AACR2 and RDA. At that time, the participants at the Workshop decided to take a ‘siddon look’ position, which is, ‘let’s wait and see what happens as the discussions on the topic unfold’. Nevertheless, successive workshops of the Section after 2010 have always featured RDA as a major theme and issue of discussions in order to further familiarize and educate librarians that there was a limit to how long Nigerian libraries stay with the ‘wait and see’ position.

Copy cataloguing has become very popular in Nigerian academic libraries. This is a process whereby catalogue records of other libraries are copied with or without modifications and imported into the copying library’s records. Copy cataloguing is as old as library practice in Nigeria but made more popular by the adoption of information technology and the electronic cataloguing system in academic libraries. Most academic libraries in Nigeria follow the American cataloguing standards and copy their catalogue records large from the Library of Congress (LC) online catalogue. LC has successfully completed converting its records from AACR2 to RDA formats in April 2013 (Morris and Wiggins, 2016). The implications of this for Nigerian academic libraries are that: (1) they would have to adopt RDA if they will continue to use LC records for copy cataloguing; and (2) their original cataloguing would have to comply with RDA standards if the resultant records will be shared and linked to the global information networks.

This study was born out of the need to understand the readiness of academic libraries in Nigeria to implement RDA standards for describing their resources for visibility in the networked environment. It has been observed that more and more national and academic

libraries are implementing RDA. Many are converting their catalogue records to from AACR2 to RDA standards. Hence, there cannot be any better time for academic libraries in Nigeria to follow the trend because, according to Goldsmith and Adler (2014), the AACR2 standards no longer provide the means for proper description of all resources being catalogued by academic libraries. If the envisioned national union catalogue for Nigerian libraries would be realized, adopting a common standard of practice such as RDA would be the way to go. Therefore, this study provided answers to the following research questions.

1. What is the level of awareness of academic libraries in Nigeria about RDA standards?
2. What is the level of knowledge of academic librarians in Nigeria about RDA?
3. Are there any academic libraries in Nigeria using RDA standards?
4. If there are, what is the level of implementation of RDA in the libraries?

Academic libraries were adopted for the study because it is a common knowledge that they are the most developed library system in Nigeria and because they always blaze the trail of every development in library practice in Nigeria. The professionals working in these environments are considered to be more exposed to best practices and trainings in the field of librarianship. As a result, they are expected to be conversant with the latest development in cataloguing standards and principles, particularly with RDA, FRBR and FRAD.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

RDA is a content standard that ‘provides a set of guidelines and instructions on formulating data to support resource discovery’ (RDA Toolkit, Introduction). It both replaces and builds upon AACR2, as no further development was made to AACR2 since 2005 but the work of rule creation, revision and amendment has been focused on RDA (Hunt, 2013). RDA is founded upon entity-relationship model of Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records (FRBR) and Functional Requirements for Authority Data (FRAD) (Oliver, 2010). Unlike AACR2 which is based around types of materials and headings, individual chapters giving rules for specific material types, RDA is structured around FRBR and FRAD entities and their relationships. As a result, cataloguers are now forced to think about resources being described within an FRBR framework (Riva and Oliver, 2012). According to IFLA Study Group on the FRBR (1998), RDA supports user tasks of ‘find’, ‘identify’, ‘select’ and ‘obtain’ because of resource descriptions created by the descriptive content. Similarly, the IFLA Working Group on FRANAR (2009) contended that controlled access points (previously referred to as headings in AACR2) describe an entity associated with a resource (e.g. a creator) and support the FRAD user tasks of ‘find’, ‘identify’, ‘contextualize’ and ‘justify’.

Though formally released as a web-based RDA Toolkit in June, 2010, RDA has a long history as it was released in a draft form for community review in late 2008 (Hunt, 2013). RDA went into official field test with selected US libraries between October and December, 2010 and the report from the field test libraries and subsequent official response was released

between May and June, 2011 (Library of Congress, 2011). The field test report revealed nine principal reservations which the Joint Steering Committee for the Development of RDA (JSC) and the publishers had made significant progress to overcome, thereby setting the official launch date to March 31, 2013.

The date was adopted by the Library of Congress (Goldsmith and Adler, 2014), British Library (Danskin, 2013) and other libraries, both in the US and internationally. Some other libraries, such as Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek, Libraries and Archives, Canada and the National Library of Australia, have set dates for their own adoption in the period up to 2015 (Hunt, 2013). However, there is no report of library in Nigeria making such declaration of set dates for the adoption of RDA in literature. This is worrisome because, according to Hunt (2013), libraries do not have a choice of whether to adopt or not. As long as academic libraries in Nigeria derive their data from external sources such as LC Online Catalogue, OCLC WorldCat and shelf-ready vendors, there cannot be alternative to RDA adoption.

Hunt (2013), using the Rogers' technology diffusion theory, classified RDA adopters to five namely: innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority and laggards. Innovators are the RDA field test libraries, early adopters are the libraries that adopted RDA before the majority and went live immediately after March 31, 2013 and the early majority are described as libraries that had planned schedule for RDA adoption before end of 2013 and early 2015. The late majority are those libraries that cautiously wait for that time they perceive is right to adopt RDA, while the laggards are the libraries that hang unto AACR2 because they do not believe RDA offers any better alternative. The academic libraries in Nigeria can be categorized into either the late majority adopters or the laggards because despite the avalanche of information about RDA and its benefits none has made any declaration to adopt it.

Cullen (2016) identified 'waiting for evidence of how RDA works for other organizations' as the major reason for non-adoption of RDA in a study of RDA implementation in 16 SCONUL member libraries in Ireland. Other reasons such as 'RDA does not meet our needs', 'RDA subscription too expensive' and 'current library management system does not support RDA' were also adduced for non-adoption by a few of the libraries. Also, Kishimoto and Snyder (2015) identified 'familiarizing oneself with RDA and learning to navigate the RDA Toolkit' as a challenge to using the new standards. These reasons could account for Nigerian libraries not adopting RDA.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The study adopted the survey approach and the population was the entire academic librarians in Nigeria. Academic librarians are library and information professionals practicing in libraries of universities, polytechnics, colleges of education and other tertiary institutions awarding certificates, diplomas, degrees and other academic honours in Nigeria. The total enumeration sampling technique was used to draw the sample for the study. All academic librarians registered on Nigerian Library Association (NLA) online forum formed the sample

of the study. The NLA Forum is a *Yahoo!* discussion group created for and open to all librarians in Nigeria. On this forum members can make comments on national and international professional matters and also provide information about events, programs and opportunities for librarians.

A 15-item self-developed but based on information gleaned from literature was used to collect data for the study. The data collected include demographic information of the librarians and their libraries, and the levels of awareness, knowledge and implementation of RDA standards in their libraries. The questionnaire was developed into an online survey instrument using the Google Forms application. The hyperlink to the survey (<http://goo.gl/forms/vZBFCsQwrLpxj9IM2>) was sent to the NLA Forum for a period of four weeks. Weekly reminders were sent to the Forum to encourage participation and to ensure a high response rate. The data collected were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS).

At the expiration of the four weeks, 89 academic librarians responded with 65 (78.3%) from university libraries while six and four responded from polytechnic and college libraries respectively. Eight librarians responded from research institutes and the remaining six did not indicate their places of work.

## **RESULTS**

### **Demographic characteristics of the respondents**

Out of the 89 librarians that participated in the study, 51.2% were males and 48.8% were females. The average age of the librarians was 42.8 years; the youngest and the eldest being 29 and 64 years old respectively. The participants had practiced as librarians for 12 years on the average and had been in their present libraries for an average of 9 years. Table 1 show the types of academic institutions where the participants worked. About 78% are academic librarians in universities while 28% are distributed among polytechnics, colleges of education and research institutes.

In terms of official status, seven participants are heads of libraries (i.e. university librarians, polytechnic librarians, college librarians and institute librarians), while four are deputy or assistant heads of libraries. The other respondents are distributed among the upper and lower rungs of the ladder of the profession as applied to the institutions. However, nine did not indicate their status.

Table 1 also presents the units of the library where the participants work. About 40% work in the Cataloguing/Technical services units while almost 15% work in the e-resources management/virtual services units of the libraries. Six respondents did not indicate where they work. Since job rotation is a feature of library work, it is expected that all the participants must have worked in the Cataloguing/Technical sections of their libraries at one time or the other; and those who are yet to would at one time or the other be posted there

before the end of their careers. This may explain why all librarians irrespective of where they work participated in the study.

**Table 1: Demographic characteristics of the respondents in Nigeria**

<b>Place of work of the respondents</b>		
Type of institutions	Number of the respondents	Percentage
Universities	65	78
Polytechnic	6	
Colleges of education	4	
Research institutes	8	
Not specified	6	
<b>Official status of the respondents</b>		
Heads of libraries	7	
Deputy/Assistant Heads of libraries	4	
Principal Librarians	9	
Senior Librarians	14	
Librarian 1	19	
Librarian 2	18	
Assistant Librarians	9	
Not specified	9	
<b>Duty posts of the respondents</b>		
Cataloguing & Classification/Technical services	36	
E-resources management/Virtual services	13	
Readers' Services	11	
General administration	8	
Serials unit	5	
Acquisitions/Collection management	5	
Automation/Systems unit	3	
No response	8	

### **RDA awareness of the librarians**

The participants were requested to indicate the tools used in their libraries for cataloguing information resources on a checklist. The list included common tools such as the Library of Congress (LC) Classification Schedules, LC Subject Headings, Dewey Decimal Classification Scheme, Sear's List of Subject Headings, Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules, LC Cutter Table, Cataloguer's Desktop, Cataloguing Calculator, LC Classification Web, OCLC WorldCat, etc. Majority mentioned at least two of the tools as what they used in their libraries.

The participants were also asked if they had heard about RDA before the survey. 78 (88%) said they had heard about it while 11 (12%) had not. Table 2 shows the sources from where the participants got their awareness of RDA with attendance of local conferences, workshops/seminars being the highest (35 participants; 45%) and through lectures in the library school being the least (5 participants; 6%). Obviously, the participants were quite aware of RDA and that, through informal means.

**Table 2: Sources of the participants' awareness of RDA**

Source of awareness	Number of respondents (N=78)	Percentage
Attendance at local conferences/ workshops/seminars	35	45%
While browsing the Internet	20	26%
Through friends and colleagues	18	23%
Through personal studies/research	16	21%
Attendance at international conferences/workshops/seminars	8	10%
Participation in online discussion groups	7	9%
Through lectures in library school	5	6%

**Participants' knowledge of RDA**

The responses to the statements in Table 3 show the participants' level of knowledge of RDA. The answer should be 'yes', 'no' or 'I don't know'. It is apparent that the participants have some basic knowledge about RDA because they got the answers to many of the questions right. However, more than half (56%) did not know that the rules were formally released in 2010. Similarly, more than half of the participants knew that RDA is compatible with any metadata coding schema, which is an indication that they only had basic knowledge about the concept but were oblivious of its technicalities.

**Table 3: Participants' knowledge about RDA**

S/N	Statements about RDA	Right	Wrong	I don't know
1	RDA is a standard for descriptive cataloguing	76	2	11
2	RDA was released in 2010	37	2	50
3	RDA provides instructions on formulating bibliographic data	73	1	15
4	RDA is used by libraries and related cultural organizations, such as museums and archives	68	3	18
5	RDA replaces AACR2	52	20	17
6	RDA is not different from AACR2	46	20	23
7	RDA is based on FRBR	52	2	35
8	RDA is used for internet resources only	51	21	17
9	RDA is compatible with any coding schema	44	4	41
10	RDA presents data as they appear on the document	58	4	27

**Use of RDA in academic libraries**

The study also investigated the status of RDA implementation and use in the libraries where the participants work. The participants were asked to show their levels of agreement or disagreement with statements connoting denoting RDA use and implementation on a scale of four ranging from strongly disagree=1 and strongly agree=4.

**Table 4: Use of RDA in academic libraries**

S/N	Statements on use of RDA	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1	My library uses RDA to describe its resources	55	11	12	11
2	All our catalogue records are in RDA format	58	15	10	6
3	Our library management system has been configured to reflect RDA principles	52	18	8	11
4	My library is using RDA for its new records and e-resources	52	16	10	11
	<b>Mean</b>	<b>54 (61%)</b>	<b>15(17%)</b>	<b>10(11%)</b>	<b>10(11%)</b>
5	My library is planning to change to RDA as soon as we have the expertise to do it.	17	13	14	42
6	My library will implement and use RDA if we have the technical know-how	13	5	17	53
7	My library would have been using RDA but there is no budgetary support to acquire the kit.	35	17	14	23
8	Challenge of retro-conversion is delaying my library's decision to use RDA	51	16	10	12
9	RDA is too cumbersome, so my library may not use it.	54	24	10	1
10	My library has no other choice than to use RDA because it is the current practice direction for cataloguing work	21	11	13	44

The statements in Table 4 could be categorized into four different levels of RDA use and implementation in the academic libraries in Nigeria. Statements 1 to 4 indicate 'already implemented RDA'; statements 5 to 8 depict 'ready to use RDA but constrained' while statement 9 means 'may never use RDA' and statement 10 implies 'has no choice but to use RDA'. Only about 22% of the participants believed that their libraries are already implementing RDA while about 71%, 42% and 25% respectively agreed and strongly agreed that lack of expertise/skills, inadequate budgets/finance and retrospective conversions of records constrained their libraries to use RDA. This implies that lack of expertise and skills was the major constraint to the use and implementation of RDA in Nigerian academic libraries. Furthermore, over 83% of the participants indicated that RDA may never be implemented in their libraries because they felt it was too cumbersome to use and approximately 64% believed that their libraries had no other choice than to use RDA eventually.

## DISCUSSIONS

A major finding of this study was that the participants were only aware of topics relating to overview and development of RDA. This is similar to the findings of Mansor and Ramzdan (2014) who studied RDA perception among Malaysian cataloguers. The main source of awareness of the participants was attendance at local workshops/seminars and conferences. The authors expected this to be the situation because the Cataloguing, Classification and



Indexing Section of the Nigerian Library Association (NLA) has been making RDA a major theme of discussions during its annual workshops/seminars since 2011 and such events have always witnessed a large turn-out of librarians from different parts of Nigeria. Also, NLA granted the Section a permission to sponsor a special session of its annual Conference, attended by over 500 librarians, to present a commissioned paper on the subject of RDA in July, 2015 at Osogbo, Osun State. The speaker, Mrs. K.O. Jagboro, from Hezekiah Oluwasanmi Library, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile Ife, re-introduced RDA to the audience, re-iterated its features and explained its workings to the audience at the 2015 Conference. These efforts must have informed why attendance at local conferences, workshops and seminars was the leading source of RDA awareness for the study's participants.

Knowledge of RDA must transcend just creating awareness about it. Librarians need to have a practical demonstration of its workings. The finding of the study has shown that the participants lack the technical nitty-gritty of RDA which could hamper its full adoption and implementation in Nigerian libraries. Therefore, RDA should be taught in library schools just as AACR2 and other metadata standards are. A cursory look at the curricula of some library schools in Nigeria revealed non-mentioning of RDA as a topic in the outlines of courses like cataloguing and classification, organizational knowledge and theory of knowledge. This could explain the smallness in the number of the survey's participants that heard about RDA in library school.

The study also confirmed that librarians in Nigeria did not have any formal training in RDA. Presently, there are no known local training opportunities on RDA in Nigeria because library schools are yet to include it in their curricula. Also, overseas trainings are expensive and beyond the reach of most academic libraries, especially, in this time of economic recession that has affected every aspect of the Country's social life. In order to fill this gap, the Cataloguing, Classification & Indexing Section of the Nigerian Library Association attempted to organize a training workshop to be anchored by ITOCA in October 2016, Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria. The proposed Workshop was cancelled because the Section could not raise funds to pay the \$21,900 ITOCA charged for the training. It is apparent that, unless something better happens to the economy, the cost of formal RDA training may remain unaffordable to Nigerian academic libraries.

There is no gain-saying that implementation of RDA is almost non-existent in Nigerian academic libraries as revealed by the study. Though a few of the participants claimed that their libraries were implementing RDA, what was considered as implementation and use might just be import and reuse of RDA records which may reflect different levels of dependency on copy cataloguing (Danskin, 2014). This supports Ahonsi (2014) who found that academic libraries in Nigeria were yet to implement RDA. There was not documentary evidence of any library in Nigeria that had any policy on RDA implementation. Even the National Library of Nigeria has not made any move towards institutionalizing the replacement of AACR2 records with RDA records either through copy cataloguing or original cataloguing. The study identified three factors constraining the implementation of RDA in academic libraries which included lack of requisite skills and expertise to use it, lack of funds

to acquire the RDA toolkit and the challenge of converting existing records from AACR2 to RDA. The constraints were similar to those identified by Alan Danskin (2013) among non-implementing libraries in the United Kingdom.

The study also revealed the ‘no-alternative to RDA’ notion of the participants. The implication is that the librarians believed that RDA have come to stay hence academic libraries have no other choice than to embrace its implementation to catalogue information resources for more visibility in the networked environment. Collection development in academic libraries in Nigeria depends largely on the foreign book market since local publishers find it difficult to thrive because of pirating activities and hostile business environment. This has made copy cataloguing popular for the fact that most foreign publications come with Cataloguing-in-Print (CIP) records and also because the books always have their metadata already described in one online public access catalogue or the other. Library of Congress (LC) online public access catalogue, as found in the study, is the most used among academic libraries in Nigeria. LC completed conversion of its records from AACR2 to RDA in December 2013 (Goldsmith and Adler, 2014) and the CIPs and OPAC records produced now exist in RDA standards. Therefore, for effective copy cataloguing by Nigerian academic libraries, implementing RDA is inevitable.

## CONCLUSION

Academic libraries in Nigeria are yet to implement RDA despite the relative high level of awareness and knowledge of the concepts among librarians in the institutions. At the time of writing this paper, there was no library in the Country that has implemented RDA; neither was there any that had policy on ground to convert catalogue records from AACR2 to RDA standards. Since the move to RDA is accepted by Nigerian academic library professionals as inevitable due to the libraries’ dependence on LC bibliographic data, the planning and implementation process should begin in earnest. This will lead to more national cooperation than existed previously among the libraries. In order to derive these benefits, the following are recommended for an effective implementation of RDA in Nigeria academic libraries.

1. Since lack of expertise is a major constraint to RDA implementation among academic libraries in Nigeria, it is imperative to consider training and retraining of library professionals on the new standards which should be cost effective and affordable to the libraries. This can be achieved through informal continuing professional development programmes such as webinars and workshops relating to RDA. There are lots of RDA related webinars online particularly those offered by LC and Association of Library Collections and Technical Services (ALCTS). Such webinars can be projected in reserved rooms for group viewing and discussion. Cataloguing and other technical services staff can be encouraged to attend such webinars.
2. Because of low level of ICT literacy among library staff in Nigeria (Adeleke and Olorunsola, 2007), the RDA toolkit which is an integrated, browser-based online product, may be difficult for users to navigate (Kishimoto, 2013). Therefore, it is imperative to produce a RDA handbook prepared for Nigerian cataloguers for them

to read and understand the new cataloguing standards. The handbook should include examples of what a typical AACR2 form would look like in the new RDA form. It could also include examples of LC and WorldCat records in RDA standards. It could show the changes and additions made to the AACR2 by RDA. This will enhance the rate of understanding of the librarians and improve their expertise with using the RDA toolkit.

3. Perceived high cost of the RDA toolkit is another constraint to the implementation of RDA in most academic libraries in Nigeria. In order to mitigate this challenge, academic libraries could pool their resources together in a consortium arrangement to acquire the online RDA toolkit and share among themselves. This will lighten the burden of individual libraries bearing the whole cost.
4. The National Library of Nigeria (NLN) as the legal depository of all publications emanating from the Country has the responsibility to give direction to all libraries for bibliographic data control as it is done by other national libraries. NLN is expected to produce and manage the catalogue records of all Nigerian publications and distribute same to other libraries in the Country to follow the examples of Library of Congress and British Library. It is recommended that the NLN should lead in the execution of the RDA implementation project by providing the funds and other logistics at the national level for overseas training and acquisition of the RDA toolkits. The trainees will have the responsibility to train other librarians within the National Library and in other libraries in Nigeria.
5. Also, the Cataloguing, Classification and Indexing Section should set up a national steering committee that would liaise with major stakeholders in library and information profession for inclusion of the teaching of RDA in the curricula of library schools and in the mandatory continuous training programmes of Librarians' Registration Council of Nigeria in to provide formal training to librarians on RDA.

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