

TO: Joint Steering Committee for Revision of AACR
FROM: Sally Strutt, British Library representative
SUBJECT: Persistent identifiers and URLs

The British Library thanks ACOC for its informed proposals, with which we largely agree. We have the following comments:

Section 3: URL of the online resource described by the bibliographic record.

Proposed Instruction, X.X.0.1. Definition: our understanding is that a URL is the global address of a Web resource, so we would suggest changing “remote access resource” to “Web resource”.

(To quote Tim Berners Lee: “the [URI] is the most fundamental innovation of the Web, because it is the one specification that every Web program, client or server anywhere uses when any link is followed.” *Weaving the Web*, Orion Business Books, 1999. p.42)

X.X.0.6, Recording changes in URLs: in the second sentence we suggest changing “deleted” to “no longer active”:

“... If a Uniform Resource Locator is no longer active, delete the Uniform Resource Locator and record the deletion in a note.”

Placement of the proposed instruction: this is tricky. In the absence of anywhere better, we would agree with the proposed Option 3, placing the instruction with the Information on terms of availability. We prefer this to the other two options. However, this is not ideal; persistent identifiers are not to do with terms of availability. Terms of availability are national, not international, and they are time-specific. They provide information relating to a nation’s own market place, to support acquisitions. This does not seem the best place to cite instructions concerning persistent identifiers.

It also throws open the question of where instructions about other identifiers, such as work identifiers, might be placed. Should instructions about all identifiers actually be in Part II, rather than in Part I of RDA, given that they are descriptive elements used as access points?

We have no helpful conclusions about where we think instructions for identifiers should go in RDA, but we think this is a question that needs to be addressed before RDA is published. Putting the proposed instruction with those for terms of availability does not seem right for persistent identifiers, and there will be other work and expression identifiers in the future for which RDA should also provide instructions. We should find an appropriate place for them all.