

TO: Joint Steering Committee for Development of RDA
FROM: John Attig, ALA Representative
SUBJECT: Revision of RDA instructions relating to librettos and lyrics for musical works (RDA 6.2.2.10.2, 6.27.4.2, Appendix I.2.1, and Glossary)

ALA proposes the following revisions relating to access points for librettos, lyrics, texts, etc., of musical works. These issues were identified as high priorities by the Canadian Association of Music Libraries/Library of Congress/Music Library Association's RDA Music Revisions Facilitation Task Force. The proposal was developed by the Bibliographic Control Committee of the Music Library Association, and has been endorsed by ALA.

“Lyrics” as a type of text for a musical work

In RDA, the authorized access point for a libretto or other text of a musical work must be formed by using the access point for the author of the libretto or other text, followed by the preferred title for the libretto or other text. Whereas AACR2 provides an alternative for librettos and other texts to be entered under the composer's name, RDA does not provide this alternative. RDA 6.27.4.2 instructs the cataloger to create a variant access point for the libretto or other text by combining the access point for the composer of the musical work with the preferred title of the musical work. This is to be followed by the term *Libretto*, *Librettos*, *Text*, or *Texts* as appropriate.

There have been some questions raised as to why the term *Lyrics* could not be used as part of this instruction. This question becomes particularly relevant when one looks at the examples in 6.27.4.2. The final example has a variant access point of *John, Elton. Songs. Texts. Selections*, followed by the authorized access point it is referring to of *Taupin, Bernie. Lyrics. Selections*. If *Lyrics* can be used as a conventional collective title in a preferred access point, it would make sense for the same term to be used in a variant access point.

This document proposes to revise 6.27.4.2 to allow for the use of the term *Lyrics*, in addition to the terms *Libretto*, *Librettos*, *Text*, and *Texts*. It also proposes to add glossary definitions for the terms *Libretto(s)*, *Lyrics*, and *Text(s)* that will aid the cataloger in deciding which of these terms to select and to revise the descriptions of “librettist” and “lyricist” in Appendix I to agree with the proposed glossary definitions of *Libretto(s)* and *Lyrics*. Finally, it proposes changed wording for the caption of 6.27.4.2 to reflect the inclusion of lyrics, libretto(s), and text(s).

Ancillary to the proposed changes outlined above, this document proposes adding the terms “Librettos” and “Lyrics” to the list of conventional collective titles provided in 6.2.2.10.2 (“Complete Works in a Single Form”), alongside “Novels,” “Plays,” “Poems,” and the like. The instruction refers the cataloger to 6.14.2.8 for compilations of musical works, and the presence of “Librettos” and “Lyrics” on the list provided in 6.2.2.10.2

would make it absolutely clear to the cataloger that librettos and song lyrics are not considered musical works.

Although the main focus of this proposal is 6.27.4.2, the other proposed revisions are related to the core issue. However, the other proposed revisions can be deliberated separately from the proposed revision to 6.27.4.2, since they can potentially be fast-tracked without regard to the outcome of 6.27.4.2. This is especially true for the description of the relationship designator “lyricist” in Appendix I.2.1, which as it stands now is incorrect. In restricting the use of “lyricist” to the realm of non-dramatic musical works, it precludes the cataloger from using “lyricist” with respect to musicals. This means that the cataloger could not use “lyricist” as the relationship designator for Stephen Sondheim, for example, for his role as lyricist of *West Side Story*.

Rationale: In the example named above, using the term “lyrics” with respect to both Bernie Taupin in the authorized access point and Elton John in the variant access point would be a transparent and user-friendly approach that would aid the user in completing the FRBR user tasks of finding and identifying appropriate resources (in this case, collections of lyrics to Elton John songs). A survey of AACR2 name-title authority records using “Songs. Texts” under artists such as Cole Porter, Bob Marley, Tori Amos, Bob Dylan, Jimi Hendrix, and Elton John reveals that, in all cases, the work cited uses the word “lyrics” in the title. The New Harvard Dictionary of Music defines “lyrics” as “the words of a popular song or number from a musical comedy.” Likewise, the Oxford English Dictionary gives “the words of a popular song” as a definition of “lyric.” To replace the more generic term “texts” with the widely-used and widely-understood term “lyrics” in a variant access point under the popular music artist’s name surely would be a boon to catalog users.

This is not to say that the term “texts” does not have its place. On the contrary, “texts” is quite appropriate with reference to art songs and folk songs, whereas “lyrics” is less so, according to the definitions cited above. Therefore, it would be wise to retain the three separate categories in order to address the three different types of situations. The long-standing distinction between “Libretto(s)” and “Text(s)” is certainly warranted, and the proposed distinction between “Lyrics” and other types of texts appears equally valid.

Access points for librettos, lyrics, texts, etc.

In AACR2 21.28B1, related works are to be entered under the heading for the person etc. responsible for the related work. 21.28A1 states that librettos and other texts set to music fall into this category. For example, the libretto to *Marriage of Figaro* would be entered under Da Ponte, not Mozart. However, 21.28A1 footnote 7 allows for librettos and other texts to be entered under the heading for the composer, a practice that libraries have followed. The construction of the uniform title for a libretto or other musical text entered under composer is governed by 25.35E1, which instructs that *Libretto* be added to the uniform title for an “opera, operetta, oratorio, or the like.”

In RDA, the authorized access point for a libretto etc. must be formed by using the access point for the author of the libretto etc., followed by the preferred title for the libretto,

etc. There is no alternative as there is in AACR2. Instead RDA 6.27.4.2 instructs the cataloger to create a variant access point for the libretto etc. by combining the access point for the composer of the musical work with the preferred title of the musical work. This is to be followed by the term *Libretto* or *Librettos*, or *Text* or *Texts*, as appropriate (or *Lyrics*, if this proposal is approved).

However, the instruction fails to take into account those situations where the author of the words and the composer of the music are the same person, as is the case with the operas of Richard Wagner. Application of the instruction as written would result in a variant access point for the libretto of a Wagner opera that would be identical, save for punctuation, to the authorized access point for the libretto. This is best demonstrated by example:

The preferred title for the opera *Lohengrin* by Richard Wagner would be *Lohengrin*. This is also the preferred title for the libretto. Because they are identical, one would need to apply 6.3.1 and supply the form for each work. In this case it would be “Opera” and “Libretto”.

In forming the authorized access points for these two works, one would apply RDA 6.28.1.2 to construct the authorized access point for the opera.

One would follow 6.27.1.2 to construct the authorized access point for the libretto. In both cases, the authorized access point would be:

Wagner, Richard, 1813-1883. *Lohengrin*

Because these are identical, one would need to add a term indicating form of work, according to RDA 6.27.1.9. The authorized access points would become:

Wagner, Richard, 1813-1883. *Lohengrin* (Opera)

Wagner, Richard, 1813-1883. *Lohengrin* (Libretto)

Now according to RDA 6.27.4.2, one needs to construct a variant access point for the libretto. Because the instruction says to combine the authorized access point for the composer with the preferred title of the musical work, and then to add *Libretto* etc., the variant access point for the libretto would appear as:

Wagner, Richard, 1813-1883. *Lohengrin*. Libretto

This would be practically identical to the authorized access point for the libretto, which is:

Wagner, Richard, 1813-1883. *Lohengrin* (Libretto)

ALA considered two different approaches to address this problem, which stems in part from the special nature of librettos. In a FRBR context, librettos can be considered both systemic (“an integral aspect that extends across and is interwoven with the rest of the content of the work – FRBR, p. 67), and also segmental (“discrete components of a work whose content exists as a distinct identifiable segment within a whole.” – Ibid.)

The first approach considered by ALA proposed treating these special types of works, where one person is responsible for both the music and the words, as a single work. In

this scenario, the words *Libretto*, *Librettos*, *Lyrics*, *Text*, or *Texts* would just be appended to the access point and not used as a qualifier. This would mirror the AACR2 practice and would not entail changing any existing records. ALA decided not to pursue such a revision because it would misrepresent musical works that use pre-existing texts authored by the composer.

The second approach supported the current RDA instructions that treat the libretto and the opera as two distinct works. ALA endorsed this approach, and proposes a revision to RDA 6.27.4.2 to add an instruction not to make a variant access point when the composer of the music is the same person, family, or corporate body as the author of the text. This solution will require adding the qualifiers (Opera) and (Libretto) in those cases to clearly identify the separate works.

1. RDA 6.2.2.10.2

Proposed Revision:

6.2.2.10.2

Complete Works in Single Form

Record one of the following conventional collective titles as the preferred title for a compilation of works (other than music, see [6.14.2.8](#)) that consists of, or purports to be, the complete works of a person, family, or corporate body, in one particular form.

Correspondence

Essays

Librettos

Lyrics

Novels

Plays

Poems

Prose works

Short stories

Speeches

If none of the above is appropriate, record an appropriate specific collective title (e.g., *Posters*, *Fragments*, *Encyclicals*).

If the compilation consists of two or more but not all the works of one person, family, or corporate body in a particular form, apply the instructions given under [6.2.2.10.3](#).

Clean Copy:**6.2.2.10.2****Complete Works in Single Form**

Record one of the following conventional collective titles as the preferred title for a compilation of works (other than music, see [6.14.2.8](#)) that consists of, or purports to be, the complete works of a person, family, or corporate body, in one particular form.

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If the compilation consists of two or more but not all the works of one person, family, or corporate body in a particular form, apply the instructions given under [6.2.2.10.3](#).

2. RDA 6.27.4.2**Proposed Revision:****6.27.4.2****Variant Access Point Representing One or More Librettos, Lyrics, or Other Texts of Musical Works**

Construct a variant access point representing one or more librettos, lyrics, or other texts that have been used in specific musical works by combining in this order:

- a) the authorized access point representing the composer of the musical work or musical works, formulated according to the guidelines and instructions given under [9.19.1](#) for persons, [10.10.1](#) for families, or [11.13.1](#) for corporate bodies, as applicable

- b) the preferred title for the musical work or musical works, formulated according to the instructions given under [6.14.2](#)
- c) the term *Libretto*, *Librettos*, *Lyrics*, *Text*, or *Texts*, as appropriate
- d) another distinguishing term, if needed.

EXAMPLE

[First four examples omitted; no change]

John, Elton. Songs. ~~Texts~~ Lyrics. Selections

Authorized access point for the compilation:

Taupin, Bernie. Lyrics. Selections

Do not apply this instruction in cases where the composer of the musical work or musical works is the same person, family, or corporate body as the author of the text.

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6.27.4.2

Variant Access Point Representing One or More Librettos, Lyrics, or Other Texts of Musical Works

Construct a variant access point representing one or more librettos, lyrics, or other texts that have been used in specific musical works by combining in this order:

- a) the authorized access point representing the composer of the musical work or musical works, formulated according to the guidelines and instructions given under [9.19.1](#) for persons, [10.10.1](#) for families, or [11.13.1](#) for corporate bodies, as applicable
- b) the preferred title for the musical work or musical works, formulated according to the instructions given under [6.14.2](#)
- c) the term *Libretto*, *Librettos*, *Lyrics*, *Text*, or *Texts*, as appropriate
- d) another distinguishing term, if needed.

EXAMPLE

[First four examples omitted; no change]

John, Elton. Songs. Lyrics. Selections

Authorized access point for the compilation:

Taupin, Bernie. Lyrics. Selections

Do not apply this instruction in cases where the composer of the musical work or musical works is the same person, family, or corporate body as the author of the text.

3. RDA Appendix I.2.1

Proposed Revision:

librettist An author of a ~~libretto~~ the words of an opera or other musical stage work, or an oratorio. For an author of the words of just the songs from a musical, see *lyricist*.

lyricist An author of the words of a ~~non-dramatic musical work, except for oratorios~~ popular song, including a song or songs from a musical. For an author of just the dialogue from a musical, see *librettist*.

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librettist An author of the words of an opera or other musical stage work, or an oratorio. For an author of the words of just the songs from a musical, see *lyricist*.

lyricist An author of the words of a popular song, including a song or songs from a musical. For an author of just the dialogue from a musical, see *librettist*.

4. RDA Glossary

Proposed Revision:

Libretto The words of an opera or other musical stage work, or an oratorio. For the words of just the songs from a musical.
Lyrics ▼

Lyrics The words of a popular song, including a song or songs from a musical. For just the dialogue from a musical,
Libretto ▼

Text 1) Content expressed through a form of notation for language intended to be perceived visually. Includes all forms of language notation other than those intended to be perceived through touch.
Tactile Text ▼

2) The words of a musical work other than an opera or other musical stage work, oratorio, or popular song. For just the dialogue from a musical,
Libretto ▼

For the words of just the songs from a musical,

Lyrics▼

Clean Copy:

Libretto

The words of an opera or other musical stage work, or an oratorio. For the words of just the songs from a musical.

Lyrics▼

Lyrics

The words of a popular song, including a song or songs from a musical. For just the dialogue from a musical,

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