

TO: Joint Steering Committee for Development of RDA

FROM: Gildas Ilien, (BNF) for EURIG

SUBJECT: RDA 3.19.13 for video encoding formats and addition of a new element for optical disc characteristics

EURIG acknowledges the short term need to integrate specific descriptive elements related to digital format characteristics which are similar in nature as the description of document carrier types.

While this ALA proposal targets specific files and carriers of relevance to the management of audiovisual collections, it should however be noted that similar needs could and will predictably be addressed in the future for many other types of digital resources, whether textual, audio, multimedia, etc.

This raises an important methodological issue which EURIG would like to raise: is RDA, as a set of cataloguing rules, the proper vehicle to maintain and publish information about potentially all digital file formats which are likely to be present in digital collections ?

Unlike physical carriers, which have developed over time at a rather reasonable speed allowing for proper documentation and characterisation in cataloguing rules (e.g printed book, periodical, videotape, videodisc, etc.), the situation is different for digital file formats.

There are many more file format types. Versions are meaningful and need to be documented, both for descriptive and preservation purposes. Innovation and usage, in this area, lead to the multiplication and constant update of file formats.

Maintaining this information directly within the cataloguing rules seems impossible over time.

EURIG suggests that, instead, the JSC considers referring to existing file format registries and standards which are well accepted in the Library and Archive communities, such as those maintained by the Library of Congress¹ or the National Archives in the UK².

EURIG suggests that the JSC engages a discussion with relevant organisations from the digital preservation communities in order to define a proper articulation between RDA rules and file format registry initiatives. Member institutions of EURIG which are involved in these communities and organisations, such as the British Library, the Bibliothèque nationale de France or the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek will be happy to second the JSC in this effort if required.

¹ [<http://www.digitalpreservation.gov/formats/index.shtml>]

² [<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/PRONOM/Default.aspx>].