

To: Joint Steering Committee for Development of RDA

From: Kevin Marsh, ACOC Representative

Subject: Machine–Actionable Data Elements in RDA Chapter 3: Discussion Paper

ACOC thanks ALA for preparing this discussion paper. The idea proposed has merit, and we think there is significant discussion to be had around the questions posed. The following comments are provided for advance consideration.

The paper advocates treating both extent and dimensions as a single class, named Aspect. This is the basis for all the options presented but ACOC are not able to find arguments within the paper to support this change.

In RDA at present Extent is a combination of the number and type of unit (and/or subunit). The proposal keeps this distinction, renamed as Unit and Quantity. ACOC are not clear on the value of renaming 'number' to 'quantity' except that 'quantity' is less constrained than 'number'.

An argument can be made for improving machine manipulation if the number and the unit are treated separately; this was considered in the development of RDA and ACOC recalls that Karen Coyle wrote about this, but the JSC at the time did not feel the effort was warranted.

One of the main issues is the difficulty in meeting the needs of both human users and machine users of the data. The examples on p. 7 of the discussion paper demonstrate the problem: the example for how '1 atlas (xvii, 37 pages, 74 leaves of plates)' would look when broken down loses the order of the pagination; the example for '1 score (viii, 278 pages) and 24 parts' loses the relationship between the score and the subunit information for the score. The issue is referred to in the third paragraph on p. 3. ACOC's hesitation is that until an acceptable solution for this issue is found we don't think such a revision can be practically pursued.

Dimensions is a different matter, and may be more amenable to such break down (because of the more limited set of values), and more worthwhile to break down (because of the potential value to libraries in terms of stack management, e.g., in providing those libraries that collect and permanently retain large physical collections with a way of tracking the physical growth of these collections).

ACOC recognize that the Aspect – Unit – Quantity model has theoretical appeal. However

- we don't think it can be practically implemented at this time;
- we're not sure the benefit of implementing such a wide-ranging change is commensurate with the degree of effort that would be involved; and
- we don't think it should be considered a high priority at this stage in the development of RDA.