

TO: Joint Steering Committee for Development of RDA
FROM: Alan Danskin, British Library representative to JSC
SUBJECT: Treatment of Subjects in RDA British Library Response.

The British Library thanks ALA for this thoughtful analysis. We welcome and support the recommendations.

Comments made by representatives of European agencies at the EURIG Members' Meeting, in Stockholm, 19-20 September, are also included.

Comments on recommendations:

1. **General approach to subjects in RDA** "ALA recommends that RDA include brief general guidelines, sufficient to allow subjects to be integrated into a general RDA data model. It would provide definitions of a few key entities, attributes, and relationships, thereby providing "hooks" that can be used to connect the RDA data model to the data models specified by individual subject systems. The goal would be to allow those applying RDA, including both catalogers and system designers, to understand subject concepts as part of the same conceptual model as the other features of RDA."

British Library response: We support the lightweight approach recommended by ALA. It is sufficient that RDA establishes the principle that the subject of resources is an essential component of comprehensive description and access and provides the hooks to connect to subject systems. RDA should not unduly constrain the choice or application of subject systems.

EURIG: There was general agreement with the sentiment, but there was not consensus on the approach to be taken, either the FRSAD approach advocated by ALA or the FRBR approach documented in 6JSC/Chair/8.

2. **Choice of model:** ALA recommends that RDA adopt the FRSAD approach, with a single subject entity, rather than the FRBR

Group 3 entities that are the basis for the placeholder chapters currently included in RDA.

British Library response: We support the recommendation. Although we were initially concerned that FRSAD was too high level to implement, we now see its hospitable structure as an asset, which will enable RDA to be used with any appropriate subject system. The adoption of FRSAD as a model for RDA will have to be reflected in RDA 0.3 *Conceptual Models Underlying RDA*.

EURIG: there was a majority, but not a consensus, in favour of this approach.

3. **Terminology:** ALA recommends that the FRSAD terms "Thema" and "Nomen" be replaced in RDA by the terms "Subject" and "Name of Subject".

British Library response: Whichever terms are chosen should be explained in 0.3. The substitution of English terms could be a barrier to understanding the semantics of these two entities and needs very careful consideration. A further factor to consider is that BIC has adopted the term "Thema" for its subject standard.

EURIG: there was no consensus. Strong support was given to both views.

4. **User tasks:** ALA recommends that the FRSAD user tasks be documented in RDA 0.0, "Purpose and Scope". The JSC should consider extending the FRSAD user task **Explore** to FRBR Group 1 and Group 2 entities.

British Library response: We agree with both recommendations. We do not think that "Explore" is adequately covered by "Find". Explore is predicated on the relationships defined by RDA, whereas find does not require these structures.

5. **Entities:** ALA recommends that there be only one subject entity in RDA: the FRSAD "Thema" entity — renamed "Subject" in RDA (see recommendation #3 above). Consistent with the treatment of names elsewhere in RDA, the FRSAD "Nomen" entity — renamed "Name of Subject" in RDA (see recommendation #3 above) — should be treated as an attribute of the **Subject**

entity. The FRBR Group 3 entities (**Concept, Object, Event, and Place**) should not be treated as entities in RDA

British Library response: Agree in principle, but see reservations on renaming at 3 above. We agree that it would be inconsistent to treat Concept, Object, Event, and Place as entities in RDA. Treating "Nomen" as an attribute of "Thema" is consistent with the way RDA treats names as attributes. Changing this approach, would require massive change to RDA chapters 6, 8, 9, 10, 11 and we do not believe this would be desirable.

EURIG: agree that (if this approach is followed) the FRSAD entities should be modelled consistently with other entities in RDA and that the designation should be an attribute of the entity, rather than a separate entity.

6. The primary Subject relationship: The FR models specify that the *has as subject / is subject of* relationship only exists between the **Work** entity and the **Thema** entity (see #13 below). ALA recommends that this specification be accepted provisionally.

British Library response: We agree that the primary subject relationship should be restricted to the work. We think this is one of the defining properties of the Work and do not see a compelling case for extending it to Expression. We see no justification for attribution of subject at the manifestation or item level. It is true that the subject the work may not be co-extensive with the subjects of all the contents of a manifestation of the work or its exemplars, but these can be expressed by analysing the components.

EURIG: Agrees that the subject relationship should be specified at the work level only.

7. Subject vs. genre/form: The Subject entity as defined in FRSAD describes what a work is **about**; it does not specify what a work **is** (i.e., its form or genre). Entities, attributes, and relationships for genre/form should be treated separately from subjects in RDA. ALA sees a critical need for RDA to deal with genre/form. We recommend that the JSC urge the FRBR Review Group to develop genre/form as an extension to the FR model. We also recommend that the JSC indicate its willingness to accept relevant proposals from JSC constituencies, regardless of whatever action is taken in the FR models.

British Library Response: We support these recommendations.

EURIG supports these recommendations

8. **Subject chapters in RDA:** ALA recommends that most of the placeholder chapters dealing with subjects in RDA be eliminated. Instead, we recommend the following chapters:

Section 4. Recording Attributes of Subjects

Chapter 12. General Guidelines on Recording Attributes of Subjects

Chapter 13. Identifying Subjects

[These two chapters could probably be merged]

Section 7. Recording Relationships to Subjects

Chapter 23. General Guidelines on Recording the Subject of a Work

Section 10. Recording Relationships between Subjects

Chapter 33. General Guidelines on Recording Relationships between Subjects

Appendix L. Relationship Designators: Relationships between Subjects

[There may not be any such designators; they would tend to be defined within each subject system.]

British Library response: We support these recommendations for restructuring RDA. We note that although this is a substantial change to the structure of RDA, the actual impact should be small as the changes are to placeholder chapters. However, JSC will need to market the changes, so that the rationale is clearly understood by RDA users and customers.

EURIG: This was not discussed in detail, as there was no consensus on the approach to be taken.

9. **Events:** ALA recommends that instructions covering events as subject headings (currently in placeholder Chapters 15 and 36) should be included in the general guidelines for recording

attributes and relationships of subjects (Chapters 12/13 and 33 in the previous recommendation). Instructions for recording attributes and relationships of events as corporate bodies should remain in Chapters 11 and 32.

British Library response: We support this recommendation.

EURIG: This was not explicitly discussed.

- 10. Places:** ALA recommends that the present content of Chapter 16, Identifying Places, be retained in RDA. However, we think that serious consideration should be given to moving this content to Chapter 11, Identifying Corporate Bodies.

British Library response: We strongly support this recommendation and would be willing to develop proposals to this end.

EURIG: This was welcomed by the majority of members.

- 11. Attributes of the Subject entity:** The FRSAD attributes of the **Thema** and **Nomen** entities, along with their definitions, are listed below. ALA recommends that (a) **Name of Subject** be treated as an attribute of the **Subject** entity, and that (b) the FRSAD attributes of **Nomen** be treated as attributes of the **Name of Subject** attribute. This would be the first case in which RDA defines attributes of an attribute, but it seems justified in this case. We also recommend that **Preferred Name of Subject** and **Variante Name of Subject** be defined as element sub-types of the **Name of Subject** element, in order to be consistent with the treatment of names elsewhere in RDA. These modifications have been included in the list below, along with our comments on each attribute

British Library response: treatment of the nomen as an attribute of the thema is consistent with RDA's treatment of title of the work and of names in general and can be justified on those grounds. However, CILIP raised concerns regarding the redesignation of these elements. We do not think that the

names should be changed without further consideration of the definitions.

EURIG: This was not explicitly discussed.