

**To:** Joint Steering Committee for Development of RDA  
**From:** Dave Reser, LC Representative  
**Subject:** Instructions for Recording Relationships: Discussion Paper

We thank ALA for raising the issues in this discussion paper, and note that locating the instructions for “content notes” is something we need to stress for trainees in our RDA Toolkit training, as they would never find them on their own! We are also sympathetic to the concern that there are no explicit guidelines for constructing structured descriptions; our PCC-related policies refer to existing CONSER documentation, though this is probably not the best solution for all types of resources.

### **Background**

ALA notes in the background section that “There are instructions in RDA for constructing authorized access points representing works, expressions, **manifestations, and items.**” (emphasis added); however, there are no instructions for constructing access points for manifestations and items (*see* “Access points for manifestations and items” in 5JSC/Sec/6/Rev (Issues deferred until after the first release of RDA)). This is one of the reasons that the structured description technique for expressing relationships is so important in the current RDA and MARC world.

We agree with ALA that the re-worded definition for structured description is an improvement, but wonder whether it is correct to refer to it as a ‘composite element’; it is our understanding that relationships are not elements.

Most of the discussion in the paper is related to the concern over which elements in RDA would be used to construct a structured description at different FRBR entity levels. The resulting suggestion (e.g., to use only work attributes in a structured description of a related work) seems not particularly useful to us. We offer two possible alternatives for more discussion:

1) Consider whether wording should be added to explain that structured descriptions are not really used to describe another work or expression, they in fact are used to provide a structured description of a manifestation that *embodies* the related work or expression. In other words, the examples in RDA show the related work, as manifested in a particular resource, and the user could then obtain the manifestation that contains the work/expression they are interested in. This approach would borrow some wording from Chapter 17 primary relationship concept “...the relationship between a work and a manifestation that embodies that work.”

2) It seems unlikely to us that limiting structured descriptions at a work (or expression) level to only work (or expression) attributes would be very useful to the user. If there is a desire to use structured descriptions in such a limited way, then perhaps the technique of using structured descriptions for works and expressions should not even be offered as a possibility in RDA—rely only on the identifier, authorized access point, or unstructured

description technique at those entity levels. Our preference is for the approach in 1) above.

We do concur with ALA's contention that choosing the elements that would be most useful in a structured description (full or partial) is difficult. IFLA's *Guidelines for the application of the ISBDs to the description of component parts* (2003), notes similar challenges for a similar task:

However, since the purpose of this segment is merely to identify the host item, not to describe it in full, there will rarely be a need to include all the elements that might be used to describe the host item. The choice of elements to be included will depend on the uniqueness of the elements themselves, or conversely, the similarities (in title, publication, etc.) between the host item and others, either related or unrelated.

The guidelines given below are intended to indicate, in general terms, the conditions under which a particular element may be required in order to identify the host item, that is, to avoid ambiguity that may lead to confusion over the identify of the host item, or the confounding of two or more similar items.

The resulting guidelines are fairly complex (e.g., identifying which attributes are 'normally given,' 'normally excluded'), and they are only related to ISBD elements, not the more comprehensive set of RDA elements.

### **Tentative Recommendations**

1. Generally agree that RDA should have instructions in those chapters.
2. Agree that the relationship is recorded using a combination of elements, but do not believe that the composite description is an element itself.
3. A structured description may be supplemented by a relationship designator, but we do not believe that RDA should necessarily require a relationship designator (sometimes the general relationship such as "related work" may suffice).
4. We do not believe that a structured description of a related entity should consist only of elements that record attributes of that entity (and note that the examples presented do not illustrate this either). We think that a structured description relationship would often be used to identify a manifestation that embodies the related work, expression, etc. Limiting the use of attributes would not allow the user to do this (see suggestion 1) in the background information above).
5. We agree that information for a few of the types of related entities may be useful, but would not want to see this extended to all of the types identified in Appendix J. Would it be possible to do this with well-explained examples, perhaps with separate 'categorized' example blocks (similar to the examples in 19.2.1.3, 20.2.1.3, etc.)?

6. We're not sure we fully understand the recommendation, but generally find that the 'contents notes' should reflect what is found on the resource; if controlled access points are desired, that is a different technique (authorized access points). Capturing the contents as they appear on the resource may be all an agency can afford to do in many cases (especially if capturing from ONIX data), the added expense of constructing controlled/preferred forms would not be warranted in many cases.

7. Has ALA considered some connection to a revision of 3.1.4 (Resources consisting of more than one carrier type)? LC/PCC has a policy statement to allow for recording the extent of more than one carrier there, including the ISBD/MARC 21 300\$e technique. This use is broader than what is allowed in RDA 3.1.4 as currently written, but is a practical solution. We would encourage ALA to look at this possibility.

### **Comments on the Strawman**

24.4.3.1: As noted earlier, we do not believe that structured descriptions should be limited to only the attributes of the related entity. Even if this were the case, the elements for works/expressions would need to be expanded to Chapter 7, and the elements for manifestations/items would need to be expanded to Chapter 3. The reference to a recognized display standard would have to be modified by "where appropriate", as ISBD does not provide display conventions for works and expressions. As ALA noted, 0.10 already describes the convention of using ISBD display conventions for structured descriptions of related resources.

25.1.1.3.2: Note that the reference to 6.27.1-6.27.2 limits the use of authorized access points to general works; needs to be extended to musical works, religious works, legal works, etc.

25.X examples:

- These examples show the limited usefulness of restricting structured descriptions only to attributes for works, etc.; the approach does not seem to have enough information to satisfy a user task to identify a manifestation that contains the related work.
- The examples also include relationships (i.e., creator), seemingly in violation of the instruction to use only Chapter 6.
- The use of the colon to separate the elements seems confusing, given that the colon is commonly used ISBD punctuation, but not usually for \*this\* use. Note that the reference to see Appendix D for ISBD display does not apply to works and expressions.