

TO: Joint Steering Committee for Development of RDA DATE: June 8, 2012

FROM: Barbara B. Tillett, LC Representative

SUBJECT: Revision to RDA 9.3.1.3 (Recording Dates Associated with Persons), H.1 (B.C. and A.D. Dates), and associated examples to clarify recording date spans

Background

RDA defines the element sub-type *Period of Activity of the Person* as a date or a range of dates (9.3.4) unlike the separate element subtypes *Date of Birth* (9.3.2) and *Date of Death* (9.3.3). A period of activity can be a year, a range of years, a century, or a range of centuries. RDA 9.3.4.3 (Recording Period of Activity of the Person) says to apply the instructions given in 9.3.1 when recording period of activity, but 9.3.1 (Recording Dates Associated with Persons), gives no instructions on recording a century or range of centuries. Likewise, RDA 10.4 (Date Associated with the Family) allows for the use of century spans and says to follow 9.3 when recording dates. The example for a span of centuries in 10.4.1.3 (Recording Dates Associated with the Family) shows a different practice from the example in 9.3.4.3, and neither of these ranges allows for machine manipulation of the span--unlike when a period of activity is expressed simply as [year]-[year]. Furthermore, the use of the slash symbol (/) might be confusing to the user, as a slash often indicates “or” rather than “to.”

Another issue when recording dates for a spanned period of activity is the placement of the abbreviation “B.C.” When H.1 is applied to a period of activity entirely in the pre-Christian era, the indication of “B.C.” is lost in the beginning date of the period of activity. This also impedes the machine manipulation of dates because the correct era for the beginning date is lost in a period of activity like “100–50 B.C.” Currently, the examples given in 9.3.4.3 for a period of activity in the B.C. era do not follow the instructions given in H.1. This is not a problem when a date range spans both the B.C. and A.D. eras because an abbreviation is given after each date, e.g., 11 B.C.–12 A.D.

LC proposes adding instructions on recording a span of centuries in 9.3.1.3, changing the instructions in H.1, and correcting some examples.

Proposed revisions

1. Add a new paragraph at the end of 9.3.1.3:

Record a period of activity expressed as a range of centuries in the form [century]-[century].

EXAMPLE

13th century–14th century

Period of activity

1st century B.C.–1st century A.D.

Period of activity

2. Revise the instructions in H.1:

H.1 B.C. and A.D. Dates

Use the abbreviation *B.C.* for dates in the pre-Christian era. Place the abbreviation at the end of a date or ~~span of dates~~ each date in a span in that era.

EXAMPLE

14th century B.C.

Period of activity associated with Queen Nefertiti of Egypt

flourished 377 B.C.–361 B.C.

Period of activity associated with Callistratus, of Aphidna

71 B.C.

Date of death of Spartacus

approximately 495 B.C.

approximately 429 B.C.

Approximate dates of birth and death of Pericles

Use the abbreviation *A.D.* only when the dates span both eras.

EXAMPLE

63 B.C.

14 A.D.

Dates of birth and death of Augustus, Emperor of Rome

43 B.C.

17 or 18 A.D.

Date of birth and approximate date of death of Ovid

approximately 4 B.C.

approximately 65 A.D.

Approximate dates of birth and death of Seneca

3. Revise 6.27.4.5 to change an example in the first box:

EXAMPLE

Theodore bar Konai, ~~8th/9th century~~ 8th century–9th century. Liber scholiorum (Ourmia version)

Authorized access point for the expression: Theodore bar Konai, ~~8th/9th century~~ 8th century–9th century. Liber scholiorum (Urmiah version)

4. Revise 9.3.4.3 to change the examples in the second box:

EXAMPLE

19th century

~~13th/14th century~~ 13th century–14th century

7th century B.C.

~~1st century B.C./1st century A.D.~~ 1st century B.C.–1st century A.D.

5. Revise 9.19.1.5 to change examples in both boxes:

EXAMPLE

[...]

Allen, Charles, 17th century

Allen, Charles, ~~18th/19th century~~ 18th century–19th century

EXAMPLE

[...]

Aelfifu, Queen, consort of Edwy, King of England, flourished 956

Callistratus, of Aphidna, ~~flourished 377–361 B.C.~~ flourished 377 B.C.–361 B.C.

[...]

6. Revise 10.4.1.3 to change an example:

EXAMPLE

1529–1739

1802–1945

202 B.C.–220 A.D.

~~4th–9th centuries~~ 4th century–9th century

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Period of activity

1st century B.C.–1st century A.D.

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abbreviation at the end of a date or each date in a span in that era.

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approximately 495 B.C.

approximately 429 B.C.

Approximate dates of birth and death of Pericles

Use the abbreviation *A.D.* only when the dates span both eras.

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63 B.C.

14 A.D.

Dates of birth and death of Augustus, Emperor of Rome
43 B.C.

17 or 18 A.D.

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13th century–14th century

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[...]

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