R|D|A
Board

Outcomes and Actions from the RDA Board Meeting

2020 May 11-14

Basecamp and video conference

In attendance:

John Trevor Allen	Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals
Keri Cascio	American Library Association
Marietjie de Beer	National Library of South Africa
Merideth Fletcher	Library and Archives Canada
Kathy Glennan	Chair of RDA Steering Committee
Ben Gu	National Library of China
Kim Gutchlag	National Library of New Zealand
James Hennelly	American Library Association Digital Reference
Ulrike Junger	Deutsche Nationalbibliotek
Felipe Martinez	Biblioteca Nacional de México
Chris Oliver	Canadian Federation of Library Associations (Chair)

Also attending:

Ramon Robinson	American Library Association Digital Reference
	Chair, Marketing Group

Note: The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek had kindly invited the RDA Board to hold this meeting at their library in Frankfurt. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and travel restrictions, the Board had to change to an online meeting using Basecamp for asynchronous discussion, supplemented with a Webex meeting for certain crucial discussions. The RDA thanks the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek for their kind offer of hospitality and for the preparatory work before the decision to cancel.

1. **ALA Publishing Update**
   - The Board received the reports from ALA Publishing
   - The Board commended ALA Digital Reference for its thoughtful and proactive response to the COVID-19 pandemic:
     - grant all subscribers for March 2020 through August 2020 a 60-day grace period of extended service before cancellation, in order to allow them additional time to arrange payment.
     - grant all free trial users for March 2020 through August 2020 a no-strings-attached extension of their trials from 30 days to 60 days.
     - offered a 5% discount on FY20 renewal for any non-consortia subscribers who sought to renew their RDA Toolkit subscriptions following a lapse before January 2020.
     - grant current and prospective subscribers who made specific, verifiable cases for hardship related to the COVID-19 pandemic and other events the option of six-month subscriptions at half our annual rates.
     - created and executed a communications plan of four e-mail renewal reminders per subscriber (90 days notice, 60 days notice, 30 days notice, one week past expiration notice) to help all of our subscribers remember to renew. The content of each e-mail is fresh and distinct from content in e-mails preceding and/or following it. The e-mails are written with a sensitivity to subscriber needs in a stressful socioeconomic climate.
     - observations of COVID-19's FY20 Impact on RDA Toolkit:
       - required to work remotely on short notice, many subscribers reported difficulty accessing RDA Toolkit from home and uncertainty about when they would be able to submit payment for their subscription renewals – especially for institutions whose finance and accounting employees were unable to complete their payment processes remotely
       - as the lockdown began in March 2020, RDA Toolkit saw its largest number of new subscriptions for the year, its largest number of renewals since calendar year 2019, its largest number of active users since September 2019. Based on subscriber feedback shared by e-mail and other empirical evidence, we believe that at least one of the reasons for the March improvement in numbers was that institutions around the world ensured that they had access to the resources needed to work remotely before their buildings reduced service and closed.
   - Marketing and Sales: Katie Bane left ALA Digital Reference in 2019 and Ramon Robinson joined. With Ramon's arrival, ALA Digital Reference has developed a new marketing and sales plan. It is a multi-faceted, sixteen point plan, directed primarily to digital media.

2) Report from the Copyright Holders and Trustees

- The Copyright Holders received a report on the financial situation for the RDA Fund that supports the development work for the RDA standard, and an overview of the situation of the RDA Toolkit.
- The 3R Project is close to its conclusion and there are no new and unexpected costs related to the project. Costs related to amortizing the 3R Project will start going down in the near future.
- The RDA Fund continues to pay back the debt it owes to ALA. (ALA provided substantial funding when RDA was first developed and this debt is slowly being repaid every year).
- RDA Board Chair succession: the role of Chair rotates among the three Copyright Holders. The CFLA representative finishes her first term on December 31, 2020. There was discussion about making a change so that the Chair of the Board and the Chair of RSC do not step down at the same time. So instead of a second two-year term, the next Board Chair term will be one year. Chris Oliver will serve a second term of one year, stepping down December 31, 2021. The ALA representative, Keri Cascio, will become Board Chair in January 2022.

3) RSC Report
- The Board received the report from the Chair of the RDA Steering Committee. The RSC Annual Report documents the accomplishments by calendar year. http://www.rda-rsc.org/node/610. The report for the Board covers the period since the last report.
- An update on progress with the 3R Project from the perspective of RSC who focus on the content of the standard.
- An update on community-based contributions to the RDA Toolkit, namely translations, policy statements and application profiles.
- A summary of news, outreach events and work being done by members of RSC.

4) 3R Project: progress report and timeline

- The Board is pleased to confirm that we are on track for the switchover on December 15, 2020 when the Beta Toolkit becomes the official Toolkit. However, access to the original Toolkit will continue until the RSC and the Board agree to start a one-year countdown clock. There is no decision yet on when this will countdown will start.
- The April update went well. The parts of the 3R Project under the control of RSC and ALA Digital Reference are going well and are on schedule. Translations, policy statements and application profiles come from the cataloguing communities and are proceeding at their own pace. Some of this work will continue into 2021.
- The RDA Lab Series has been organized by the ALA eLearning Solutions and provides an online training opportunity at a time when organizing in-person training is not possible. Kate

James, a former member of the RDA Steering Committee, will lead attendees through the changes to RDA after the 3R Project. A fee is charged, but it covers 24 hours of instruction. The cost is much less than that of attending a multi-day workshop during a conference in another city or country.

5) Marketing Working Group

- The Marketing Working Group had stopped meeting after the Chair, Katie Bane, accepted a position at another organization. The WG will restart under Ramon Robinson's leadership. Members of the Board were asked to submit names of candidates for this WG.

6) Reports from the National Institution (NI) representatives

- Reports received from all the National Institution representatives; the reports provide important insights about the use of RDA around the globe, the challenges as well as the perceived benefits and advantages. The National Institution representatives allow the RDA Board to form a better understanding of the needs and expectations of RDA users in the different regions.
- A few highlights are reported here:
- **Africa:** South Africa taking a leadership role in terms of outreach in southern Africa; very encouraging to hear that there were exploratory discussions with Zambia, Lesotho, Namibia, Swaziland, Botswana and Mali. Upcoming visits with Ghana, Botswana and Kenya cancelled due to the pandemic. A major challenge is the diversity of languages. South Africa has eleven official languages and that is just one country. There are large numbers of people who use English, French, Portuguese, Arabic and Spanish, as well as national languages such as Amharic, Creole, Kiswhahili, Somali, etc.
- **Asia:** The National Library of China has been taking a leadership role in the area of training. Experts who catalogue ancient books are looking at the possibility of using RDA; forum where members of the national libraries of China and Korea had an opportunity to discuss and exchange strategies on using RDA in their respective countries, whose alphabets use graphical characters. Asia faces a similar challenge as Africa with the great range of different languages, and also different scripts. The multiplicity of languages and cultures also presents a challenge for communication; communication channels remain mainly informal.
- **Europe:** Many upcoming EURIG activities were cancelled by the pandemic including the IFLA satellite meeting. Some interesting developments in the area of machine generation of metadata and machine learning for the creation of metadata (and conforming to RDA). Europe also faces the challenge of the multiplicity of languages and cultures. The report includes an overview of EURIG activities and concerns as well as a summary about each member country, a very useful snapshot reminding one that there are a range of different levels of RDA use and expertise throughout Europe. The capacity to use RDA in linked data environments is seen as an important aspect of the standard.

- **Latin American and the Caribbean:** With a new representative for the region, the Board received a detailed picture of the Biblioteca Nacional de México and its implementation of RDA as well as the events and developments in Mexico. There has been a lot of work throughout the continent to build an infrastructure, that can become an official RDA regional representative body. The growth, development and level of activity of the RDA Latin America Group is very promising. There is interest in RDA and its implementation in a large number of countries: Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay.
- **North America:** North America is a fairly cohesive region with a long history of cooperation among the libraries of the two countries. Even so, it is not a unilingual region, with French as an official language in Canada, and a large number of Spanish speakers in the United States. In Canada, there is an increased integration of the French cataloguing community as the Quebec universities move to a shared catalogue using OCLC WorldShare, and a new name authority file on OCLC. Library and Archives Canada is also on the same platform and led the development of the French authority file. There is also an eagerness in North America to move closer to a linked data production environment.
- **Oceania:** There is quite a disparity between the capacity of Australia and New Zealand versus the smaller nations of Oceania. Even in Australia and New Zealand, the volume of original cataloguing is declining, with the national libraries providing the lead in the creation of original metadata. These two national libraries have also been preparing for the switch to the new Toolkit, with internal study and training. Revision of policy statements is also an important part of the preparatory work. ORDAC, the Oceania RDA Committee, is preparing to run a survey to gauge the level of engagement with RDA and potential training needs, after December 15, 2020.

7) **Governance Review**
   - The [new governance model](#) began to be implemented in 2017. One of the key goals in the [2020-2022 Strategic Plan](#) is to provide relevant governance and one of the actions is to review the governance model regularly. The Board began in March 2020 to prepare for a governance review. This review was a key part of the May meeting and all aspects were discussed.
   - In general, there was agreement that the new governance model is moving the Board and RSC forward into productive ways of working that are also better suited for a global standard.
   - For RSC governance, there was acknowledgement that the process of developing new RDA regional representative bodies is not a quick process. However, these bodies are a key part of the governance model where RSC transforms from a consultative body to an executive body. At this point, the Latin America and Caribbean region is moving quickly towards the successful formation of a RDA regional representative body. So this issue will resolve itself as the bodies take shape and are approved.

- The length of terms was discussed. Generally, there was support for the rapid turnover because it presents opportunities so that a greater number of people can become involved. The competing point of view is the value of expertise and historical knowledge. There may be some adjustments that could be made to reach a better balance. The Board encouraged RSC to discuss this and present a proposal to the Board if they felt there was a change needed.
- The closer relationship between the Board and RSC was considered a great benefit for both the Board and RSC. There was support for affirming and entrenching communication paths in the RDA Board's new operations document.
- The division into six regions, inspired by the UN model, was also discussed. Even when it was first introduced, there was acknowledgement that it might not be perfect, but it was practical while also promoting broader international involvement. At this point, there is no pressing need to review, adjust, or change this division into regions. The RDA Board and RSC will keep an eye on this issue as the use of RDA expands to new linguistic and geographic areas.
- At this point, with the debt load from the 3R Project, the RDA Board is not about to propose a radical change to the current business model. But it will look at the business models of other international standards as a preliminary environmental scan to see if there are viable alternatives to the current model.

8) **Internationalization document**
- The RDA Board discussed the possibility of creating a high-level document focusing on the rationale and principles for internationalizing the standard. There was unanimous agreement to begin work on this document.

9) **RDA Board Operations document**
- RSC has an exemplary set of [Operations Documents](). The RDA Board decided in March 2020 that an operations document would be very useful for the Board. The new governance model sets out fairly short terms so that the membership rotates at frequent intervals. Incoming members need to familiarize themselves with the processes and procedures. In addition, it offers an opportunity to maintain transparency and consistency in the way the RDA operates. A draft document was discussed and new revisions and additions suggested.

10) **National Institution representatives: recruitment or application form**
- As the whole world moved to working online during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Board decided to add a sentence in the form about the National Institution's capacity to provide infrastructure support for the use of online tools. The idea was approved and the revised form has been circulated internally. This new version of the form will be used for the 2020 recruitment for new representatives from Asia and Europe.

11) **RDA Board website**

a. **Amended documents**
The Sponsorship policy had a minor change. A sentence implied that the annual in-person meeting is always in the city where a Copyright Holder is located. In 2020, the RDA Board was supposed to meet in Frankfurt, not London, Chicago, or Ottawa. So "usually" was added indicate a pattern and allow for exceptions. The latest version is at the web site.

b. **Web site development**
The RDA Board has discussed the web site and acknowledged that it needs some development work. This work is deferred until after the December 15 switchover when the Beta Toolkit becomes the official Toolkit. Many of the same people who would help with web site changes are also involved in the 3R project and the launch of the Beta Toolkit as the official Toolkit.

12) Dates of next meetings

- There will be four meetings between June 2020 and May 2021:

    3 online meetings: September 14-17
    November 30-December 3
    February 22-25

    Date and place for the meeting in May 2021:
    If in-person: May 12-14, Ottawa, Canada
    If online: May 11-14