

To: Joint Steering Committee for Development of RDA
From: John Attig, ALA Representative
Subject: Terms of rank, honour or office: Revision of RDA 9.4.1 and 9.19.1

ALA thanks the British Library for its proposed expansion of the scope of Title of the Person to include terms indicative of rank, honour, or office. ALA supports the intentions of this proposal: consistency with FRBR/FRAD, and avoidance of undifferentiated access points.

However, the devil is in the details. ALA agrees with the Library of Congress that there remain important unresolved issues that were raised in the responses to the earlier proposal.

ALA remains concerned that the proposed instructions do not give sufficient guidance regarding the selection and recording of appropriate terms. Should terms be limited to those regularly appearing with the name in preferred sources? Should such terms be recorded only when they are regularly used as an integral part of the name? Is the form of the term (abbreviation vs. full form) to be determined by usage? In what language should such terms be recorded? Such instructions need to be included explicitly at 9.4.1 and at 9.19.1.

ALA also remains concerned about the overlap between terms indicating rank, honour, or office and terms indicating Profession or Occupation.

ALA is also concerned (for this element as for others) with the distinction between what it is appropriate to record in the element and what it is appropriate to add to an authorized access point. For example, military rank can be important identifying information, but this information is quite dynamic. Recording rank(s) – along with the applicable dates – in the Title of the Person element can be extremely helpful, but as an addition to the authorized access point representing the person, it is likely to cause confusion. The same argument applies to other terms indicating rank, honour, or office.

We also note that there are quite a few related instructions that either need to be revised or need to be provided with new references.

As noted above, ALA does support the intentions of this proposal, but feels that the specific instructions are not yet adequate to resolve the concerns stated above.