To: Joint Steering Committee for Development of RDA

From: Deirdre Kiorgaard, Chair, JSC

Subject: RDA Core elements and FRBR user tasks

RDA Core elements and FRBR user tasks

1   Background

At the April 2008 meeting in Chicago, JSC decided that it would be preferable to designate certain elements as "core" rather than designating all elements as either "required" or "optional." Making a distinction between "required" and "optional" elements is ambiguous for elements that are required only in certain situations.

The purpose of this document is to articulate the relationship between the core elements as defined in RDA 0.6, and the FRBR and FRAD user tasks.

1.1 What is the RDA core element set?

- The core element set is a subset of the RDA element set.

- The RDA core element set specifies the minimum set of data consistent with RDA compliance.

- The core element set reflects those attributes and relationships which attained a "high" rating for the user tasks defined by FRBR (see 2.1) and FRAD (see 2.2).

- The core element set is a floor, not a ceiling. Agencies are encouraged to enhance the core element set to specify national requirements; reflect local needs; or to enable access to a specific resource. Additional elements may also be needed to differentiate one resource from other resources bearing similar information.

1.2 Why is an RDA core element set necessary?

- The core element set provides guidance for implementers as to the relative significance and applicability of elements.

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- Some of the elements defined in the RDA element set are appropriate to specific types of resources (e.g. types of content or carrier), but may not be widely used for general collections.

1.3 Who will use the RDA core element set?

- The core element set should be used by any user of RDA.

- The core element set may be used by agencies that do not require the richness of the full RDA element set.

- The core element set may also be used selectively by agencies for specific projects or workflows.

- The core element set may be used by agencies creating a provisional or basic record which will be updated or incremented over time.

- The core element set may be used for benchmarking in a collaborative environment.

2   RDA and FRBR/FRAD

2.1 How does the RDA core element set relate to FRBR?

The IFLA Study Group on the Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records (FRBR) analysed resource discovery and identified four specific tasks:

- to <u>find</u> entities that correspond to the user's stated search criteria (i.e., to locate either a single entity or a set of entities in a file or database as the result of a search using an attribute or relationship of the entity);

- to <u>identify</u> an entity (i.e., to confirm that the entity described corresponds to the entity sought, or to distinguish between two or more entities with similar characteristics);

- to <u>select</u> an entity that is appropriate to the user's needs (i.e., to choose an entity that meets the user's requirements with respect to content, physical format, etc., or to reject an entity as being inappropriate to the user's needs);

- to acquire or <u>obtain</u> access to the entity described (i.e., to acquire an entity through purchase, loan, etc., or to access an entity electronically through an online connection to a remote computer).

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Chapter 6 of the FRBR final report documents the methodology by which attributes and relationships were mapped to these user tasks.[i] For each user task, relative values were assigned to each attribute or relationship. The relative values were: high, medium, low and not applicable. The values were assigned by the Study Group drawing upon the professional knowledge and experience of its members, supplemented by an evaluation of the published literature and assessments prepared by external experts.

The RDA element set has been mapped to FRBR. RDA elements and relationships inherit the value assigned to FRBR attributes and relationships. The RDA core elements were selected from those attributes and relationships which attained a "high" rating for any of the user tasks. This process gave precedence to attributes and relationships needed to:

- 1) identify and select the manifestation;

- 2) identify the works and expressions embodied in the manifestation ;

- 3) identify the creator(s) of the resource

Attributes with a medium or low rating were also included if FRBR indicated that a higher value would be warranted for particular types of resources, for example rare books.

2.2 How does the RDA core element set relate to FRAD?

Chapter 6 of the *Functional requirements for authority data (FRAD)* documents the methodology by which attributes and relationships defined in FRAD were mapped to the FRAD user tasks[ii]. The mapping identifies all potential uses of data associated with a particular attribute or relationship. FRAD does not assign any weighting to the mappings. The report notes that, "Designations of which attributes and relationships are considered mandatory need to be determined on an application-specific basis."[iii]

The RDA element set has been mapped to the FRAD attributes and relationships to identify the user tasks supported by RDA elements and relationships. The RDA Core element set was determined by reference to the RDA objectives and principles.

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The RDA core element set includes those FRAD attributes and relationships needed to:

- find resources by means of related entities, such as names of persons, or names of work;

- distinguish entities from others with the same or similar name;

- find works through the name of the person, family, or corporate body that created the work.

3   How will the RDA core element set support resource discovery?

- RDA core elements support FRBR/FRAD user tasks. The core element set inevitably provides less effective support for some user tasks than the full RDA element set. The strengths (see 3.1) and weaknesses (see 3.2) are described in more detail below.

- It is therefore important that local agencies determine the set of elements appropriate to their user community.

- For specific types of resources and even for specific resources, the core element set should be supplemented by other appropriate elements.

3.1 What are the strengths of the RDA Core element set?

Use of only RDA core elements should support the following:

- The core element set ensures the identification and description of the manifestation in most cases.

- The core element set relates the manifestation to the appropriate work and expression.

- The core element set relates the resource to the creator of the work (persons, families, or corporate bodies).

- The core element set ensures that entities are described and distinguished from other entities with the same or similar name.

- The core element set supports access to the content of the resource by requiring a minimum of one subject relationship.

3.2   What are the weaknesses of the RDA Core element set?

By definition the core element set does not provide comprehensive support for all of the FRBR/FRAD user tasks. Therefore it is important

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that local agencies give careful consideration to those additional data elements necessary to support the needs of their users. This list highlights those aspects of description and access that are not supported by using only the core element set.

- The core element set does not include certain elements that might help to refine a search statement.

- The core element set does not include specialised attributes.

- The core element set does not require relationships from the resource described to other works, expressions, or manifestations.

- The core element set does not require subject access beyond the single required subject relationship.

- The core element set does not require authority control of variant names.

- The core element set does not require relationships between persons, families, and corporate bodies.

3.3 How will the RDA core element set affect the catalogue user?

Agencies need to be aware that the weaknesses of the RDA core element set (see 3.2) will have real impact on their users. The impact is impossible to quantify, but covers the range from profound and lasting to temporary inconvenience. This range is illustrated by the scenarios that follow below. Agencies can ameliorate the impact, as is recommended above, by enhancing the core element set through application of local policy.

Scenario 1
Rachel, a student, follows up a recommendation from a classmate. All her classmate can remember is that, "this really cool paper was in proceedings of the Internationaler Leibniz-Kongress", she doesn't remember the year or venue, but the title was, "*Mensch, Natur und Technik,* or something like that".

RDA
The resource has been catalogued using the full RDA element set. Maria enters her search terms *"Mensch", "Natur", " Technik".* The search returns a small results, set, just 3 records and she quickly identifies the one she is looking for, ""*Nihil sine ratione: Mensch, Natur*

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und Technik im Wirken von G.W. Leibnitz. 7th Internationaler Leibnitz-Kongress".

RDA Core element set
The resource has been catalogued using only the RDA core element set. Rachel enters her search terms and retrieves two records, but she does not find the resource she is looking for. She tries another strategy and searches for the Internationaler Leibniz-Kongress. This time she gets eight hits, including the record for 7th congress. Unfortunately, there is no information that enables her to identify it as the one she wants. Rachel can either give up or recall all 8 items.

Commentary
In the second case, Rachel's search failed because the terms her friend had provided were from the subtitle of the congress. In RDA, subtitles are subsumed within the "Other title information" element, which is not included in the core element set. Nor does the core element set require variant titles, unless they are earlier or later titles. If her friend had remembered the title proper precisely, *"Nihil sine ratione"*, Rachel would quickly identify what she is looking for because the title proper is required by the core element set.

If the resource had been described using the full range of RDA elements, the search terms would have been picked up from other title information or the variant title. A local implementation policy that requires variant titles to be added to RDA Core element set if significantly different from the title proper would avoid the problem.

<u>*Scenario 2*</u>
Douglas, a public library patron, has recently enjoyed a novel by a writer whose work he had not previously encountered. Douglas wants to know whether the writer has written any other novels.

RDA
The resource has been catalogued using the full RDA element set. Douglas searches for the novelist using the name on the cover of the book he has just read. Douglas quickly finds that the author has published extensively.

RDA Core element set
The resource has been catalogued using only the RDA Core element set. Douglas searches for the novelist using the name on the cover of the book he has just read, but no hits are returned. Douglas is

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surprised and disappointed, but he concludes that the catalogue must be at fault and searches for the book by title. He finds that the name of the author is in a different form from that presented on the cover. He follows the link from the author's name and finds many other novels.

Commentary

The RDA Core element set does not require variant forms of names of persons, families, or corporate bodies to be recorded, so there is no access point under the form with which Douglas is familiar. However, Douglas is still able to find what he is looking for *because* the RDA Core element set requires that the preferred form of name is used.

Scenario 3

Ann, a faculty member, is conducting a literature survey prior to initiating a new project on the partition of Ireland. She is particularly interested in how people's daily lives were altered by political events beyond their control

RDA

The resources have been catalogued using the full RDA element set. Ann searches by subject, looking for works about Ireland in her chosen period. She is delighted to find a book, "*Territorial politics and Irish cycling*", which sheds an interesting sidelight on her subject and prompts some new avenues for research.

RDA Core element set

Ann does not get a comprehensive results set for her topic, and she fails to find "*Territorial politics and Irish cycling*" because the chronological context is missing from the subject heading assigned, "Cycling – Ireland".

Commentary

The RDA Core element set requires that only one subject relationship be recorded. There is a high risk that subject access for complex or multifaceted works will lack specificity. An agency might address these deficiencies through local policies; for example, by specifying that, where the work has a clear locus or setting, time and place should be specified.

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4   Further reading

IFLA. (1998). *Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records: final report (FRBR)*. München: Saur. Current text, including amendment and corrections to date, is available in pdf and html at:
http://www.ifla.org/VII/s13/frbr/

IFLA Working Group of Functional Requirements and Numbering of Authority Records.   (2007). *Functional Requirements for Authority Records: draft report (FRBR)*.
http://www.ifla.org/VII/d4/franar-conceptual-model-2ndreview.pdf

JSC (2008) *RDA: Objectives and principles*. Draft statement of principles.
http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/jsc/docs/5rda-objectivesrev2.pdf

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[i] Section 6. User Tasks. In *FRBR.* http://www.ifla.org/VII/s13/frbr/frbr.pdf
[ii] Section 6. User Tasks: In *FRAD*. http://www.ifla.org/VII/d4/FRANAR-ConceptualModel-2ndReview.pdf
[iii] Section 6. User Tasks, p. 50 : In *FRAD*. http://www.ifla.org/VII/d4/FRANAR-ConceptualModel-2ndReview.pdf

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