

To: Joint Steering Committee for Development of RDA
From: Dave Reser, LC Representative
Subject: Revision of 9.8.1.3, 9.9.1.3, 9.10.1.3, 16.2.2.9.2, B.1, B.11 to eliminate use of abbreviations for places

We recognize that the use of abbreviations for some places has been identified as a candidate for review for quite some time (e.g., 5JSC/Sec/6/Rev “Issues deferred until after the first release of RDA”), and understand that at some point the abbreviations will need to go away or be relegated to an alternative instruction. However, we do not support this proposal *at this time*. We note that the ALA’s Committee on Cataloging: Description and Access has formed a task group that has been charged with looking more comprehensively into the issues related to place names—we think this is a better route to follow.

Comprehensive changes to place instructions

As evidenced by the proposal from ALA approved last year (6JSC/ALA/19) and some of the additional questions it raised, as well as the thoughts raised by DNB this year (6JSC/DNB/2), there are many issues related to place names that need to be addressed. We think the approach needs to be a holistic one that addresses all of the potential issues collectively. For example,

- the question of abbreviations,
- the topic of preferred names that include larger places,
- development of Chapter 37 (Related places),
- development of Appendix L (Relationship designators for concepts, objects, places, and events), and,
- the eventual location of place name instructions and relationships under discussion (6JSC/Chair/8 and 6JSC/ALA/Discussion/2 where the question of moving place instructions from Chapter 16 to 11 is raised).

We strongly urge the JSC to consider a comprehensive plan rather than implement changes piecemeal, for a few reasons:

1. While many changes to place name records can be mechanically adjusted by program, this is by no means a simple task. We are ever grateful for the efforts of PCC contributors (especially Gary Strawn) to develop some of the automated solutions for changes to access points for RDA accomplished earlier this year; however, such projects require significant development of specifications, testing, and cooperation of many impacted stakeholders. It is clear that many of the ideas that have been suggested related to place names may require projects to change existing records. Due to the resources involved in such projects, we would prefer

not to move forward on any one piece until we know the extent of all changes—we would like to avoid changing the same record, or form of heading, more than once.

2. Although it may not be a major consideration for all RDA implementers, the Library of Congress must also consider the impact of these changes on the *Library of Congress Subject Headings* (LCSH) and *Library of Congress Classification*. Places that are not jurisdictions (e.g., rivers, mountains, lakes, valleys, regions) and other types of subject entities (e.g., buildings, streets, trails, plazas, mines, fountains, gardens, parks, archaeological sites) that are qualified by place names would have to be re-formulated as well. The potential changes involve tens of thousands of records, and due to the special nature of the maintenance for these vocabularies, the changes must all be manually prepared. We obviously would not want to face multiple changes. Other systems and vocabularies may be impacted as well—we think the communities that develop and maintain those systems need to be consulted to address the impact.

3. Incorporating major revisions to a single chapter in RDA in each update has the potential to confuse catalogers when the ground shifts significantly every year. This is not to imply that we are opposed to the continual revision process, but if multiple changes *are* envisioned, we'd prefer to see those changes happen together in order to assist re-training efforts.

To reiterate—we are generally supportive of an eventual goal to remove abbreviations in place names; in fact, our cartographic cataloging specialists are quite enthusiastic. We think it is more prudent to have a comprehensive view of other potential changes to place names and relationships before this happens, and are encouraged by the task group formed by ALA.

We are also sympathetic to the desires for “Change 2” proposed by the British Library regarding the formulation of names used as additions to other access points and for use in other elements (e.g., place of birth). For this reason, we have agreed to a PCC proposal to always use an ‘authorized access point form’ when recording a place name in MARC Authority Field 370; we hope this approach can serve as an interim solution until such time as a more comprehensive agreement on the treatment of places under RDA can be achieved that applies to access points themselves.