

To: Joint Steering Committee for Development of RDA
From: John Attig, ALA Representative
Subject: Date of signing a treaty (6.20.3.3, 6.29.1.33)

ALA thanks CILIP for following up on this, and LC (and others) for providing the text of what such a change might look like.

ALA agrees with CILIP (and the British Library) that this inconsistency is minor, and that no change is required. In fact, we believe that there may be good reasons for the difference in treatment. ALA firmly believes that we should record information as **data** whenever possible, and this suggests not only recording full dates, but doing so in a standard format (such as ISO 8601) which can both be parsed and sorted by applications. On the other hand, we are not certain that this structure is appropriate for inclusion in an access point.

ALA believes that this raises once again the issue of recording the content of an element versus including the content of that element as part of an access point. If the instructions for recording the content of the element must fully support the way in which that content is to be used in an access point, then we are limiting the functionality of both. This issue goes beyond the specific case raised in this proposal, but ALA urges the JSC to adopt a general and principled approach.

In this specific case, technical considerations may render the distinction between element and access point moot. If the date is recorded in the element as YYYYMMDD, it should not be difficult for either a cataloger or an application program to identify the digits representing the year for use in the access point.

ALA also acknowledges the inconsistencies between and within the instructions in 6.20.3.3 and 6.29.1.33, and would support suggestions to address them. ALA prefers that such a solution take the broad approach of 6.20.33, rather than the narrow approach of 6.29.1.33.

At this time, ALA takes no position regarding the difference in treatment between single treaties and compilations; we understand the American Association of Law Libraries has begun to consider the question.

ALA also raises one additional issue. It is quite common for more than one treaty between the same parties to be signed in the same year; it is not unusual for more than one treaty between the same parties to be signed on the same day. For example:

- France. Treaties, etc., United States, 1923 Feb. 13 (Rights in the Cameroons)
- France. Treaties, etc., United States, 1923 Feb. 13 (Rights in Togoland)
- Finland. Treaties, etc., United States, 1928 June 7 (Arbitration)
- Finland. Treaties, etc., United States, 1928 June 7 (Conciliation)
- Poland. Treaties, etc., United States, 1996 July 10 (Extradition)
- Poland. Treaties, etc., United States, 1996 July 10 (Mutual legal assistance)

It is not clear that RDA provides an element that would distinguish these works.