

To: Joint Steering Committee for Development of RDA
From: John Attig, ALA Representative
Subject: Field of activity (9.15) and Profession/Occupation (9.16)

ALA thanks CILIP for following up on this issue raised in the report of the U.S. RDA Test Coordinating Committee.

The specific recommendation of the Committee is l.g.i:

Clarify distinctions between Field of activity of the person (RDA 9.15) and Profession or occupation (RDA 9.16) or merge the two elements; identify controlled vocabularies for these elements or the merged single element (MARC 372 and 374 fields).

There are two issues here: (a) the distinction between the two elements, and (b) vocabulary for the element(s).

Distinction between the two elements. There are two actions suggested:

- (a) Merge the two elements. This is the position taken by CILIP and the British Library.
- (b) Clarify the distinction. This is the position supported by ACOC, CCC, and the Library of Congress.


ALA agrees that the distinction between the two elements in the current text and examples is confusing and difficult to apply. However, ALA supports retaining the two distinct elements, with clarification of their scope. It is important to note that the strongest voices in favor of retaining the distinction came from participants in the U.S. RDA Test, who felt that they had been able to arrive at a working method for recording these two elements, and felt the differences were important enough to retain.

ALA supports any proposals that would clarify the distinction. A successful solution should deal with two issues:

1. ***Use in access points.*** In the current text of RDA, both elements are “Core if” elements that may be added to the preferred name of the person in an authorized access point. The Library of Congress suggests limiting this to the Profession or Occupation element, and not using Field of Activity in access points. We tentatively agree to this suggestion.
2. ***Grammatical structure.*** It could be argued that Field of activity should be the name of a discipline, whereas Profession or Occupation should be the name of a class of persons. Thus “architecture” would be the field of activity, but “architect” would be the profession. Again, the Library of Congress seems to be suggesting this in its changes to the examples under Field of Activity. We believe that this practical, grammatical distinction was developed by some participants in the U.S. RDA Test, and was part of the working method that allowed them to differentiate the two elements routinely. ALA supports this suggestion, but would like to see it made in the text of the instructions, not simply deduced from examples.

ALA believes that revisions that address these two issues will do much to address the confusion between the two elements.

Vocabulary for the element(s). ALA notes that the scope of these two elements is almost universal; any vocabulary would need to cover all fields/professions/occupations. We much prefer using an appropriate general topical vocabulary, perhaps modified to deal with the grammatical issues raised above, rather than attempting to develop and maintain such a vocabulary. A number of sources have been defined for terms recorded in MARC field 374 (Occupation); it should be noted that these sources are not limited to English. This suggests that appropriate vocabularies already exist. Sources defined for field 374 include:

- *Dictionary of occupational titles.* (Washington: United States Dept. of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, United States Employment Service)
- *IAA thesaurus: terminologie der Arbeit, Beschäftigung und Ausbildung* (Genf: Internationales arbeitsamt)
- *ILO thesaurus: labour, employment and training terminology* (Geneva: International Labour Office)
- *Index terms for occupations in archival and manuscript collections* (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, Manuscript Division)
- [ONET - Occupational Information Network](#) 
- *Register of Australian Archives & Manuscripts Occupations Thesaurus* (Canberra: National Library of Australia)
- *Thesaurus BIT: terminologie du travail, de l'emploi et de la formation* (Genève: Bureau international du travail)
- *Tesauro OIT: terminología del trabajo, el empleo y la formación* (Geneva: Oficina Internacional del Trabajo)