To: Joint Steering Committee for Development of RDA

From: Kathy Glennan, ALA Representative to the JSC

Subject: Discussion paper: First issue v. latest (current) issue

ALA thanks the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek for their work preparing this discussion paper. We especially appreciate the inclusion of Section 7, Stakeholders' views. We generally support the position that cataloguing agencies should be able to select which data displays to end users. We offer the following additional comments in response to this paper.

Difference in treatment – major vs. minor changes

While ALA appreciates that the proposed changes would only address serials that exhibit minor changes, we wonder if the application of this approach could be confusing. Resources with major changes would receive successive entry cataloging, but those with minor changes would be handled through latest entry cataloging. This variance has a high likelihood of leading to more difficulty in the determination of major vs. minor changes occurring in the past (i.e., for the run of the publication coming before the latest issue described in the record).

Convenience of the user

ALA believes that users seek information corresponding to the citations they have, which may or may not reflect what is used in the current publication. If it is confusing to users to see earlier data when they have later data, it stands to reason that the opposite situation would be equally confusing.

Principle of representation

This principle could be applied in different ways to a resource that contains minor changes. DNB suggests that using the "latest issue" approach would best fulfill this principle; however, it would also be possible to meet this principle by using an approach that selects the data most frequently used throughout the life of the resource. Thus, we do not believe that this principle has a significant bearing in determining whether to use the first or latest issue as the basis of the description.

E-journals

While ALA agrees that the e-journal problems as explained in Section 4.3 do exist, we believe that these largely occur with major title changes. Within the past year, various libraries have raised these concerns with vendors and publishers, and they are starting to adjust their practices in response. In response to DNB's observation that e-journals and integrating resources are treated differently, we see no particular problems with this, since there are separate sets of

instructions in RDA for different forms of issuance. The earlier or later title can always be provided within the description to record the relationships between related resources.

Potential solutions

ALA agrees that RDA should support user displays based on either earliest or latest issue descriptions. We believe that the development of a proposal to address DNB's concerns should follow the "new design" strategy suggested on p. 14-16 of the discussion paper. This would allow "first issue" and "latest issue" agencies to create data following the same instructions, and use the same set of data to produce varying displays according to their preferred conventions. The basis of description is a fundamental part of the guidelines for identification in RDA; introducing wildly variant options would make the guidelines more complex and result in less consistency of application and less interoperability of data.

While we appreciate DNB's thoughts about how this could be accommodated in MARC, we do not believe this needs to be part of a proposal for the JSC.