

To: Joint Steering Committee for Development of RDA

From: Bill Leonard, CCC representative

Subject: Discussion paper: Hidden relationships in attributes (Examples: RDA 9.4.1.4.2, 9.13, 10.6, 11.3, 16.2.2)

CCC thanks the German National Library for this thought-provoking discussion paper. CCC does not agree with all of the concerns raised and offers the following response as an explanation. This response was chiefly written by CCC members who are active in the FRBR consolidation work.

The entity-relationship model imposes a certain formalism on FRBR and FRAD, which is in turn inherited by RDA. The distinction between an attribute and a relationship is entirely artificial. Had object-oriented modelling been chosen, the characteristics we know as “attributes” and “relationships” would all be called “properties.” The properties that correspond to attributes could be distinguished by being those which link an entity to a literal string of characters as opposed to linking to a URI. This difference can be seen in how RDA element sets and vocabularies are implemented in the Open Metadata Registry.

In this view, transcribed attributes map to properties whose target is a literal, for instance, the "has as title proper" property relates a resource to a string of text. Relationships map to properties whose target is defined elsewhere (either in the OMR as a controlled vocabulary, or in another controlled vocabulary such as LCSH, or to instances of entities identified by URI based on some sort of unique number (this last is how links between resources would be done-- each resource is assigned a URI based on record numbers or other unique numbers)).

In RDA we end up having to decide whether we want certain information to be a string of text or to have to come from a controlled vocabulary. When we chose to make Affiliation an "attribute" (in addition to allowing certain PFC relationships in app.K) we allow recording of information that does not link to another authority record. There could be a greater acknowledgement of the interrelation between chapters 29-32 and some instructions in chapters 9-11, but we probably still want the similar flexibility that we have given ourselves for WEMI relationships (identifiers, authorized access points, structured and unstructured descriptions). Currently 29.4 only allows the identifiers and access point techniques, and there is the explanation of the relationship allowed at 30.2, 31.2 and 32.2.

The question of “hidden” relationships is, in this view, not particularly meaningful. This is a complex intersection between modelling decisions and encoding decisions. Encoding decisions should remain outside of the scope of RDA.

9.13 Affiliation

The definition of affiliation in RDA includes affiliations that are not RDA corporate bodies, such as cultural identity, that cannot be recorded according to chapters 29-32. Groups that are not corporate bodies or families are currently out of scope of RDA.

10.6 Prominent member of the family

This instruction could stand having a see also reference added pointing to the relationship chapters. The way RDA is presently structured, additions that can be used to construct access points are all defined in

the attributes sections of the respective chapters. For families this results in the artefact of recording the prominent member as an attribute and not as a relationship.

9.4.1.4.2 Consorts, etc

This discussion is similar to the discussion of prominent members of families. A see also reference could be added here but since we have previously indicated that we don't want the authority file to become a genealogical database, we are satisfied discerning the sovereign-consort relationship from the construct of the access point.

11.3 Associated Place

In FRBR, the entity Place was defined for subject usage only, thus no relationships with Place were defined. This might be different in the consolidated FRBR. However, we have to think of the sorts of places we might record as associated without establishing them.

16.2.2 Larger places

In consideration of the specific view that FRBR has of the entity Place, relationships among places are currently out of scope.