

**To:** Joint Steering Committee for Development of RDA  
**From:** Kathy Glennan, ALA Representative to the JSC  
**Subject:** Treatment of Choreographic Works in RDA

## **Background**

After submitting the ALA response to 6JSC/LC rep/4, I received a detailed response from New York Public Library (NYPL). They were one of the institutions that helped create the LCRI for 25.5B, and their response helps explain the background for the current Anglo-American practice for naming choreographic works.

I am sharing their document in its entirety below, as it represents the insights and concerns of experts in the field of dance. However, NYPL's viewpoints have not caused ALA to change its positions stated in 6JSC/LC rep/4/ALA response.

## **Points for discussion**

NYPL's response highlights a number of additional issues that merit discussion by the JSC:

- Does the pairing of choreography and music result in a new work?
- Are there categories of choreographic works where the choreographer is not the primary creator?  
For example, moving image works, while identified as collaborative works per RDA 6.27.1.3, are named by title, rather than creator. What kinds of choreographic works, if any, have a similar diffusion of creative responsibility?
- How should RDA provide for the creation of preferred and variant access points to allow for fulfillment of the FRAD User Tasks?
- In terms of identifying a path forward, how useful is the analogy between choreographic works and operas?  
Both of these types of works can be collaborative, or they can build on pre-existing works. Often the degree of collaboration will be known only to subject specialists, or may be determined through research. A one-size-fits-all solution, such as RDA contains for operas, may not capture the true nature of the relationship. How much of a problem is this for a cataloguing code?
- Can the music model for distinguishing between arrangements (expressions) and adaptations (new works) be applied to various "versions" of choreographic works when determining primary responsibility?

**NYPL response to 6JSC/LC rep/4****October 4, 2013**

NYPL appreciates the effort that LC put into the discussion paper on the treatment of choreographic works in RDA. As an institution that actively collects dance works in all forms, notably both manuscript choreography and moving image (i.e. film and video recordings), and as one of the co-creators (in conjunction with the Dance Heritage Coalition and LC) of the “Choreographic work” heading LCRI for AACR2, we wanted to comment on the paper, and to give some further background and history.

We have corresponded with catalogers and Dance Division staff-- many of whom were instrumental in working with the DHC to create LCRI 25.5B--who shed some additional light on the reasons for the approach taken. The following is our distillation of the comments they made, as well as thoughts gleaned from conversations with current catalogers and curatorial staff of NYPL’s Dance Division.

The instructions codified in LCRI 25.5B came out of NYPL’s practice for dance title headings, which can be seen in the 1970’s Dictionary Catalog for the Dance Division (which would have been based on AACR1), but that originate far earlier in the work that Genevieve Oswald began in 1965. The idea was that titles of dance works should file together, so that users would find all of the versions of a particular work, in one list, regardless of whether the choreographer was known. This was based on the way that patrons actually search for these works. Instead of being “odd and unprincipled” as is alleged in the discussion paper, these headings were created in this way based on the principle of collocation by title and the way that patrons could reasonably be expected to search for these works. This “principle” is also found in Section 2 of RDA, “Identifying works and expressions” 6.0 Purpose and scope:

Authorized access points representing works and expressions can be used for different purposes. They provide the means for:

- a) bringing together all descriptions of resources embodying a work when various manifestations have appeared under various titles
- b) identifying a work when the title by which it is known differs from the title proper of the resource being described
- c) differentiating between two or more works with the same title
- d) organizing hierarchical displays of descriptions for resources embodying different expressions of a work

One reason for the title entry for Choreographic works (and coincidentally Moving Image works)

is, in many cases, the diffuse responsibility for these works. In our estimation, the answer to the question **“Is a choreographic work a “work” in the RDA sense?”** is a qualified yes, just as much as King Kong (Motion picture: 1976) is a work. In both cases, there is a need to collocate all versions of the “work” to enable a patron to locate the item if the title is known. The question in our minds is how to reconcile the “work,” which is the idea of the choreographer, with the expression of the work which includes the music, costumes, staging, (and in most cases, videography as well).

We also feel that the **choreographer should be considered the creator of the work**. However, both of these answers are predicated upon the answer to question 4, namely **“What is the relationship of a choreographic work to a musical work?”** The answer to this question is complicated and depends in large part on the degree of collaboration between the composer and the choreographer. In many instances, there is little *direct* collaboration between the two --often because the composer of the musical work is long since dead! ?

Conversely, some choreographic works are created as a true collaboration between a choreographer and a composer; sometimes to a commissioned score, or to an arrangement of existing musical works, or excerpts arranged by someone other than the original composer. In addition, some choreographic works are created to be performed in silence, or to the accompaniment of something other than a musical work, or to multiple musical scores.

The bottom line is that a patron who wants to locate all of the various expressions of the ballet titled “The Nutcracker” should be able to locate them in one list, without having to know which choreographer’s work they are looking for and without having to know that the original music was composed by Tchaikovsky and originally titled “Shchelkunchik.”

We believe that the inference that the relationship between a choreographic work and its related musical work is similar to the relationship between an opera and its libretto are misguided. The opera is indeed dependent upon its libretto, and in most cases the music was specifically written to accommodate the words. Choreographic works and the musical works they are danced to are far more independent of each other.

Question 6 poses: **“Is there a “superwork” that is a compilation of the music and the dance, or is there merely performance expressing these works simultaneously?”**

We believe that in almost all cases the performance of music and dance simultaneously **expresses** a work. We believe that there is no “superwork” that would include both elements of the production, as some of them are variable, and in light of the fact that one “work” can often be separated from the other. However, there is a demonstrated need for patrons to be able to search for the title of the work to locate all of the expressions and versions of the work in existence.

There are also cases when an item (text or moving image) contains more than one version of a choreographic work, or when the specific choreographer of an expression cannot be identified, in which a title heading would be the only way to provide access.

In RDA 5.1.2 the term **expression** is used to denote the “combination of such forms” as musical or choreographic notation, sound, image... [or] movement. Clearly this implies that the video recording **manifestation** of the **performance** that we are cataloging actually contains the **expression** which consists of the combination of both the choreographic work and the musical work. How this would most clearly (and usefully) be expressed in terms of MARC is unclear.

We now pose a new question related to Question 6, namely:

**Is there a need for an authorized access point for the expression of the choreographic work and the musical work together, manifested in actual performance (which would be most often captured in a moving image format)?**

Discussion: While we agree that the choreographic work is a new work, which could be expressed in the name-title format (as in a 700 name \$t title in MARC), we believe that, in the current catalog environment, forcing patrons to search for these performances by first knowing the author would unnecessarily hinder access. In future (theoretical) cataloging systems, which would presumably utilize RDF triples and linked data to “create” records of manifestations, we could foresee the system being able to search for the combination of the title and the choreographer’s name in a relationship to be able (as RDA 6.0 puts it...) to organize a hierarchical display of descriptions for resources embodying different expressions of a work. We know of no cataloging system that can currently successfully do this without catalogers creating and using qualified title strings (access points or “uniform titles”) and applying them consistently to the records for manifestations of the items containing these works.

Questions 3 and 5 both have to do with choice of title.

### **Q. 3 “How should the preferred title of a choreographic work be chosen?”**

Despite the quibbles about the original language of the title for Nijinsky’s “Afternoon of a faun”, we believe that to record the title in Nijinsky’s native Russian (if indeed it can be proved that he scrawled it on his manuscript) would be ridiculous, and would actively hinder patrons from locating the work. It was noted by one correspondent that the Jerome Robbins choreography (manifestations of which would have probably been among the first films collected and cataloged by the “Jerome Robbins Dance Division” at NYPL) was first performed in 1953 and was titled--in English--“Afternoon of a faun.” There obviously have been other versions with titles in many languages, but “using a common title for all seemed more helpful to the public

seeking such well known works”. It was noted that only a few choreographic works merit this approach for collocation; most should be entered under their first performance “original” title.

In a recent article about Genevieve Oswald, the first curator of the NYPL’s Dance Division, she states: “For the title of a ballet or modern dance work, [we] put the name of the choreographer after the title of the work. That allowed us to organize choreographic works by choreographers under the title.” Thus, all versions (expressions?) of the work fell under the title, and could be listed with other items related to the work.

NYPL (most probably) based their decisions on AACR1 when originally creating some of these titles. The Nutcracker example is particularly apt, as it reflects not only challenges in the practical application of RDA, but the problems created during the change from AACR1 to AACR2, when the somewhat esoteric name entry of Chaikovskii was changed to the more common Tchaikovsky, but yet the commonly known (at least in the US) title form of Nutcracker was changed to the Russian form Shchelkunchik. Conjecture is that the cataloger for the Dance Division (who was previously a music cataloger, and was therefore familiar with the AACR1 forms in the 1970s) would have continued the use of the common form of Nutcracker when creating choreographic work entries instead of the newer form for the purpose of consistency as well as the convenience of the (primarily English speaking) patrons of the Dance Division.

#### **Q.5 “Should Chapter 6 include instructions on preferred titles for untitled works?”**

One correspondent believes that the answer to this should be yes, along the lines of manuscript titles referred to later in the paper. We also note the issues with the term “Manuscripts” We agree that in addition to the several types of works mentioned, that most unpublished materials (especially as is noted, those that are non-self describing) could be helpful in providing devised titles. Based on the lack of treatment of unpublished materials in RDA—especially any reference to or examples of unpublished audio-visual materials, we await any forthcoming guidance from LC’s Moving Image and Recorded Sound area, or AMIA or OLAC best practices or annotations of the instructions for cataloging such unpublished items, but in lieu of such, we often refer to DACS and AMIM as guidelines for constructing titles for unpublished moving image and sound materials.

#### **RDA and Choreographic Works: (some comments on these examples)**

**6.28.1.4 Musical Works Composed for Choreographic Movement** – We agree that the choreographic work itself (being the idea of the choreographer of how the dancers will move) is a work independent of (but clearly related to) the musical work. The question then becomes is each successive “version” of the work truly a new work or merely an adaptation or expression of

the previous work? This was clearly the intent of adding the term “after” between two choreographer’s names in the examples in LCRI 25.5B:

130 \$a Nutcracker (Choreographic work : Balanchine, after Ivanov)

Where the fuzzy line between a new work and an adaptation falls is clearly debatable, and will probably be as controversial as the distinction between works and arrangements in music.

**6.12.1.3 Recording Other Distinguishing Characteristics of the Expression** – We agree that treating the surname of the choreographer *only* as “other distinguishing characteristics of the expression,” is not appropriate; however, because this heading is primarily used for the collocation (relation in RDA?) of all of the versions (expressions) of the work, and because the dance community commonly uses these surnames as qualifiers, we feel that the choreographer’s name is appropriate here. Because (in RDA expressed in MARC) we are cataloging the manifestation of the expression (which is in turn the combination of the musical work and the choreographic work), the choreographer’s name will also be used as a 700 added entry with the relator term of “choreographer”.

**6.27.1.3 Collaborative Works** – We agree that this example is wrong. The example given here for Antony Tudor for a Labanotation score of his choreography for Soirée musicale treats him as an author. If this were a video recording of his choreography the heading would have been Soirée musicale (Choreographic work : Tudor). It is not a collaborative work because the music by Rossini (who was deceased) was excerpted and arranged by Benjamin Britten, possibly as a commissioned score.

**6.27.3 Authorized Access Point Representing an Expression**—The example given here is in fact correct in terms of AACR2 and LCRI 25.5B as well as past practice of not only NYPL and LC, but also all other Dance Heritage Coalition partners. It is only incorrect IF in RDA it is decided to discard the practical application of RDA 6.0 “Identifying works and expressions,” .

We agree that there are difficulties in reconciling the theory of RDA with the practice of cataloging these works/expressions/manifestations, but we also realize that to change the practical application of this rule now would be tantamount to throwing the baby away with the bathwater, and will result in more confusion and less accessibility for patrons.

Regarding the options for possible solutions, we feel that, because of the way patrons expect to search and find items representing choreographic works, and because past practice is established and is so different from the way other materials are handled, a separate section in Chapter 6 for Choreographic works (i.e. option 2) is warranted. We also feel that because catalogers are often

confused about the application of disparate rules for these works that a separate section could solve some of these issues.

We would be happy to work together with others on the creation of such a section.

We would like to here acknowledge the input of others to this document, many of whose comments I adapted and used without specific attribution. Pat Rader (former chief cataloger, NYPL Dance Division, retired) and Dorothy Lourdou (former chief cataloger, NYPL Dance Division, retired) both submitted responses in email which in many cases form the basis from which this paper was begun. David Brown (current lead Special Formats cataloger, and former chief cataloger for the Rodgers and Hammerstein Archive of Recorded Sound) with whom I discussed many of the points made herein, and who served as editor. Jan Schmidt (Chief of the Dance Division) provided invaluable insight as well as the article about the origins of the division and the initial work done by Genevieve Oswald (“A Bold Step Forward:Genevieve Oswald and the Dance Collection of the New York Public Library” by Lynn Matluck Brooks in *Dance Chronicle*, 07 Nov. 2011, available online), and all of the staff of the NYPL Dance Division.