

To: Joint Steering Committee for Development of RDA
From: Kathy Glennan, ALA Representative
Subject: High-level subject relationship in RDA

ALA thanks the JSC Technical Working Group for this thorough analysis of subject relationships in RDA. We agree with the majority of the recommendations in this proposal, but we have particular concerns about Recommendation 2.

General comments:

We note that all references to Appendix J instructions are off by one; the references should be to J.2.3, J.3.3, J.4.3 and J.5.3.

The rare cataloging community's citation use case frequently includes recording the location of the citation within a published descriptive resource. It is not clear whether the recommendations in this proposal will accommodate this. Citation numbers often serve as an identifier for the description (and even the described WEMI).

Recommendation 1: Add a primary relationship element to the RDA element set with the label "subject", definition "the subject of a work", and domain *Work*. The corresponding Registry property will have rdfs:label "has subject", skos:definition "Relates a work to the subject of a work", rdfs:domain rdac:C10001, and no range.

This recommendation is largely compatible with the definition proposed in 6JSC/ALA/31 (*Subject Relationship Element in RDA Chapter 23*), although there are some minor differences. Our proposal recommended:

Subject ▼ refers to the relationship between a work and an entity that is the subject of that work, i.e., that identifies what the work is about.

Recommendation 2: Bring the RDA descriptive relationship designators into line with FRSAD by allowing only *Work* to be the domain of primary descriptive relationship designators for WEMI entities (and the range of their reciprocal designators) as indicated in Table 4, and by adding sub-property relationships to the new subject relationship element.

ALA observes that in spite of the FRSAD model which limits the relationship for subjects to works, there are situations that appear to justify the existence of descriptive relationships with an expression or manifestation. In fact, some of these are used as examples in the proposal. If these relationships exist, we believe that they should be accommodated by the model, rather than being considered out of scope.

ALA reviewers agree that there are problems with the semantics relating to the Appendix J terms for descriptive relationships. However, we are not convinced that the existing J.2.3

(etc.) terms are in fact subject relationships. Rare materials cataloging experts characterize the relationship between a descriptive resource and the WEMI it describes as that of instantiation or identification of the WEMI of which the description is a surrogate, not as a subject relationship. Thus, we see a difference between descriptive relationships, which belong in Appendix J, and subject relationships, which need to be accommodated in Appendix L (see 6JSC/ALA/31, which recommends content for Appendix L). Descriptive relationships should be available at different WEMI levels, to permit relationships to both works and expressions. We would also support the extension of this concept to manifestations and items as well. Because of these issues, ALA does not support changing the Registry Element Sets without a corresponding proposal for changes in the RDA instructions.

Specific comment on the proposal:

In Table 4 and Table 5, we recommend reinstating the term “describing” in the proposed definition for *description of (expression)*, so that it reads: An expression described by a describing work.

Recommendation 3: Add to RDA the elements: *Reference to Published Citation (Work)*, Definition: “A citation for a published description of a work.”, domain: *Work*; *Reference to Published Citation (Expression)*, Definition: “A citation for a published description of an expression.”, domain: *Expression*; *Reference to Published Citation (Manifestation)*, Definition: “A citation for a published description of a manifestation.”, domain: *Manifestation*; *Reference to Published Citation (Item)*, Definition: “A citation for a published description of a item.”, domain: *Item*.

ALA agrees that these elements should be developed for RDA. We believe that the RDA Element Set should not be updated without a corresponding proposal detailing the related changes to the RDA text. For descriptive cataloging, the addition of elements *Reference to Published Citation (Manifestation)* and *Reference to Published Citation (Item)* would be welcome.

Recommendation 4: Develop a set of designators that relate WEMI to the *Work* or *Expression* containing the citation.

We support the development of designators to express the relationship between the WEMI being described and the source of the description, although it is unclear who will take on this responsibility. If characterized as WEMI-to-WEMI relationships rather than subject relationships, these would be appropriate in Appendix J along with other indexing, abstraction, etc. relationships.

Recommendation 5: New subject relationship designators should not specify a range, unless this is required for a specified purpose such as consistency with legacy relationships.

Agree.

Recommendation 6: If Recommendation 2 is not accepted, refer the labelling of the relationship designators in Table 1 to the discussion on element labels designated as task 3 for 2014 for the JSC Technical Working Group.

Agree.