

Webinar for the Southeast Asian Cataloguers Community of Practice

An introduction to using RDA for cataloguing

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R | D | A
Resource Description & Access

Agenda

1. Why use RDA?
2. What are RDA entities?
 - Structure of an entity page in RDA Toolkit
3. What are RDA elements?
 - Structure of an element page in RDA Toolkit
 - Element supertype and subtype (broader and narrower element)
4. Planning a training program
5. Supports for trainers

1. Why use RDA?

Resource Description and Access (RDA) is:

- “A package of data elements, guidelines, and instructions”
- “For creating library and cultural heritage resource metadata”
- Data that is “well-formed according to international models for user-focused linked data applications.”

1. Why use RDA?

- *Resource Description and Access* (RDA) is informed by IFLA *International Cataloguing Principles* (ICP).
- The ICP [2016 edition](#) (reinforced in the [2025 draft](#)) highlights the principle of “convenience of the user” alongside other principles.
- To enable the discovery of information collections around the world, metadata will need to be widely and openly available for re-use. IFLA [UBC statement \(2025\)](#) affirms that this goal is aided by standards that facilitate data interoperability. RDA is one of those standards.

1. Why use RDA?

- RDA offers data elements, guidelines, and instructions for creating data for libraries and cultural heritage institutions.
- Data created using RDA can:
 - Help users find, identify, select, obtain, and explore resources
 - Be compatible with bibliographic and authority data (whether presented as flat files like card catalogues or as records in relational or object-oriented databases), as well as international models for linked open data.

1. Why use RDA?

- The latest version of RDA is based on the IFLA Library Reference Model (LRM).
- Many concepts and terms come from, or expand on, LRM. It models cataloguing as the description of entities and the relationships that exist between entities.

- **Entity** = An abstract **class** of conceptual objects of interest to users.
- **Attribute element** = A **property** that is a characteristic of an entity.
- **Relationship element** = A property that **relates** one entity with another entity.

1. Why use RDA?

- RDA is compatible with ISBD (International Standard Bibliographic Description), MARC 21, and DCMI (Dublin Core Metadata Initiative)
 - *MARC 21 to UNIMARC conversion:*
<https://www.loc.gov/marc/unimarc21.html>
- RDA can be represented using RDF (Resource Description Framework), a syntax of linked open data. See *RDA Registry* (<https://www.rdaregistry.info>).
- For cataloguers: guidelines and instructions for resource description are in the *RDA Toolkit* (<https://access.rdatoolkit.org>).

2. What are RDA entities?

RDA entities are the abstract classes of objects for which RDA provides instructions. “RDA Entity” can be narrowed down to one of these subtypes:

Work

Expression

Manifestation

Item

Agent

Person

Collective Agent

Family

Corporate Body

Nomen

Timespan

Place

2. What are RDA entities?

[RDA Toolkit](#) is the utility that provides guidelines and instructions on how to describe these entities.

To describe library resources,
describe these entities:

Work
Expression
Manifestation
Item

Agent
Person
Collective Agent
Family
Corporate Body

Nomen
Timespan
Place

2. What are RDA entities?

[RDA Toolkit](#) is the utility that provides guidelines and instructions on how to describe these entities.

These entities may also be of interest for resource description and displaying relationships:

Work
Expression
Manifestation
Item

Agent
Person
Collective Agent
Family
Corporate Body

Nomen
Timespan
Place

2. What are RDA entities?

[RDA Toolkit](#) is the utility that provides guidelines and instructions on how to describe these entities.

Work

Expression

Manifestation

Item

Agent

Person

Collective Agent

Family

Corporate Body

Nomen

Timespan

Place

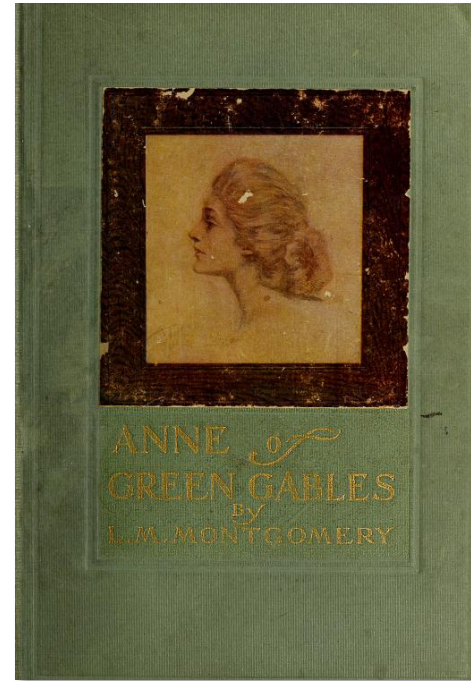
RDA refinements of
Collective Agent



2. What are RDA entities? Work

Definition: “A distinct intellectual or artistic creation, that is, the intellectual or artistic content.”

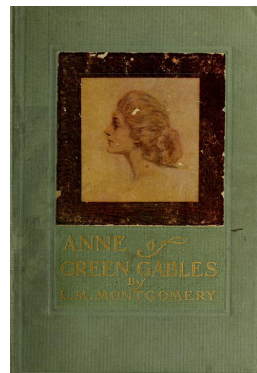
Example: *Anne of Green Gables* is a novel by the Canadian writer, L.M. Montgomery. The novel is a work.



2. What are RDA entities? Expression

Definition: “An intellectual or artistic realization of a work in the form of alphanumeric, musical or choreographic notation, sound, image, object, movement, etc., or any combination of such forms.”

Example: Each language version of *Anne of Green Gables* counts as an expression of the work.



English (original text)

Arabic

Indonesian

Vietnamese

Chinese

Japanese

Korean

+ others

2. What are RDA entities?

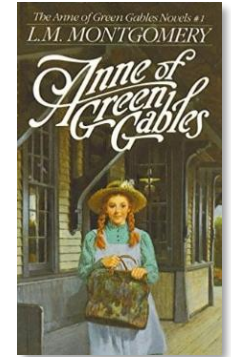
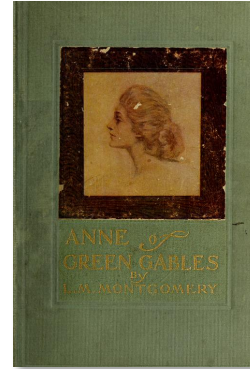
Manifestation

Definition: “A physical embodiment of an expression of a work.”

Example: The first edition, first print run of *Anne of Green Gables* from 1908 = a manifestation of the English text.

Later publications of the same expression (English text) = later manifestations of the same expression.

Examples of manifestations of other language expressions:
<https://annemanuscript.ca/stories/covering-the-world>



2. What are RDA entities?

Item

Definition: A single exemplar or instance of a manifestation.

Example: A specific copy of a manifestation that is owned by a library.



Photo: Stock image

2. What are RDA entities?

Other entities

These other entities may be described because of their relationship with Work, Expression, Manifestation, and Item:

Agent (such as Person, Collective Agent, Family, or Corporate Body)

Timespan

Place

Nomen

2. What are RDA entities?

Other entities

These other entities may be described because of their relationship with another RDA entity:

Agent (Person, Collective Agent, Family, or Corporate Body)

- Definition: “an entity who is capable of deliberate actions, of being granted rights, and of being held accountable for its actions.”
- Can play roles such as author, editor, translator, artist, publisher, owner, *etc.*



Photo: Stock image

2. What are RDA entities?

Other entities

These other entities may be described because of their relationship with another RDA entity

Timespan

- Definition: “A finite period of time.”
- Enables description of relationships with time, such as date of publication, copyright date, date of birth of [a person], date of work, *etc.*



Photo: Stock image

2. What are RDA entities?

Other entities

These other entities may be described because of their relationship with another RDA entity:

Place

- Definition: “A given extent of space.”
- Enables description of relationships with place, such as place of publication, place of manufacture, place of birth of [a person], place governed by an official body, etc.



Photo: Stock image

2. What are RDA entities?

Other entities

These other entities may be described because of their relationship with another RDA entity:

Nomen

- To associate a specific *label* (such as a name, title, access point, or identifier) with a specific RDA entity.
- Nomen is an entity because we might want to describe the usage of its label (that is, *nomen string*) -- such as the language or script used for the label, the context of its use, *etc.*



Photo: Stock image

2. What are RDA entities?

Structure of an entity page

- Definition and scope
- Prerecording
- Minimum description
- Effective description
- Entity boundary
- Recording – 4 recording methods
- Elements

The screenshot shows the 'Manifestation' entity page on the University of Toronto Libraries website. The page is titled 'Manifestation' and includes a 'Download PDF' button. The 'Definition and Scope' section states: 'A physical embodiment of an expression of a work.' The 'Prerecording' section explains that the term 'manifestation' may refer to: an individual manifestation, a part of a manifestation, a published manifestation, and an unpublished manifestation. It also notes that in RDA, transcription of data from the source ensures that, where applicable, the data reflects how a manifestation represents itself. For specific guidance about manifestation statements, see [Manifestation statements](#). Manifestations of a work are sometimes available in different formats (e.g., as printed text and microfilm; as an audio disc and audiocassette). When this occurs, record the elements that apply to the carrier of the manifestation being described. Record relationships to other available formats as an RDA Entity: [related manifestation of RDA entity](#). When describing a facsimile or reproduction, record the elements describing the carrier of the facsimile or reproduction. Record relationships to other available formats as an RDA Entity: [related](#). The page also features a 'Select Policy Statement Set (5)' dropdown menu set to 'LC-PCC PS' and a 'Send to Back' button.

3. What are RDA elements?

- **Elements** are used to describe an *entity*.
 - **Attribute element** = a characteristic of an *entity* (Example: “carrier type” of a *manifestation*, while “content type” of an *expression*)
 - **Relationship element** = a relationship that one RDA entity has with another RDA entity (Example: “place of publication” of a *manifestation*, “author person” of a *work*, or “name of person” for *person*)
- Elements are “building blocks” for a *metadata description set*.
 - Example of a *metadata description set*: a bibliographic record.
- In linked data applications, elements and values of elements can come from different sources or be re-used.

Displaying entities and relationships as a diagram

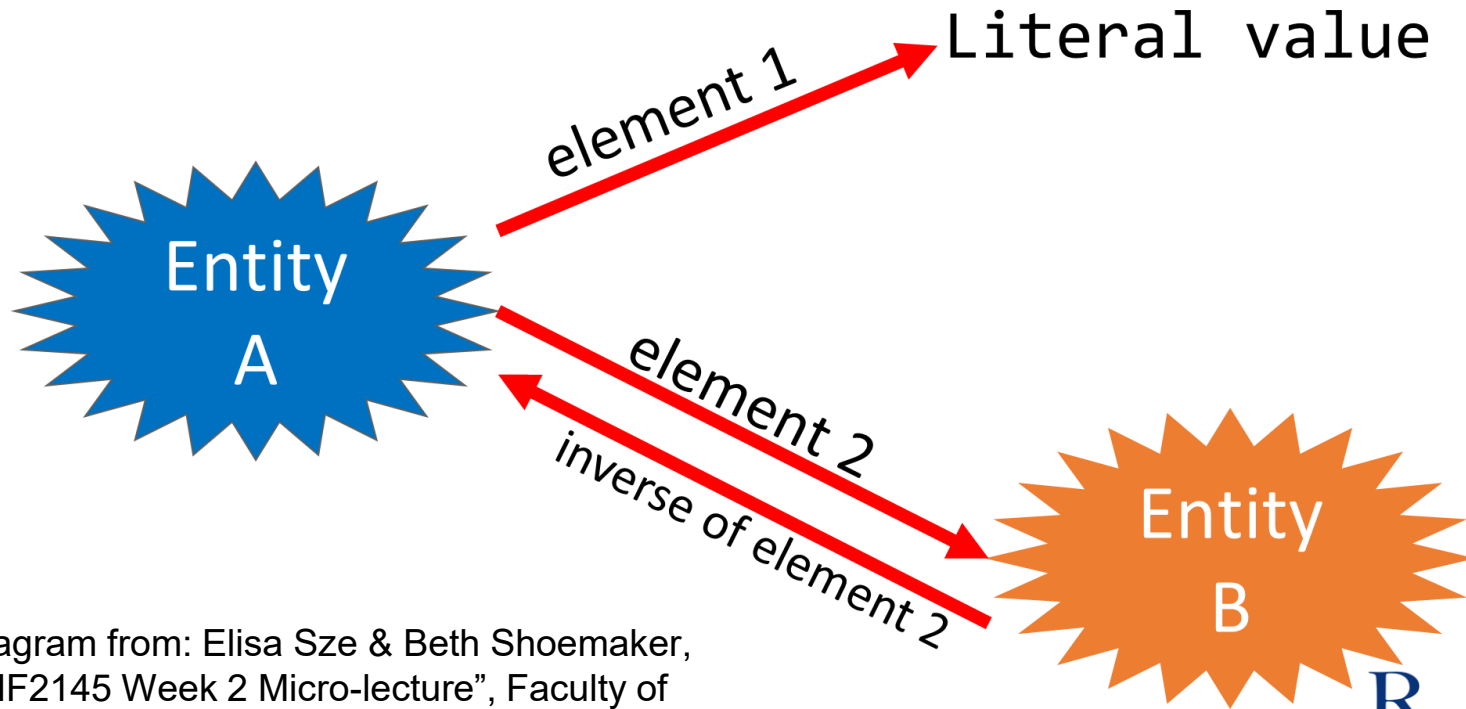


Diagram from: Elisa Sze & Beth Shoemaker,
“INF2145 Week 2 Micro-lecture”, Faculty of
Information, University of Toronto (January 2026)

Describing an entity using triple statements

Each metadata statement takes this form:

subject – predicate – object

Each statement is considered a *metadata work*. Multiple metadata statements can be brought together in a *metadata description set*.

Depending on implementation, a metadata description set may include statements for one or multiple entities.

Description of 'Entity A':

```
[Entity A] <has element 1> Literal value  
[Entity A] <has element 2> [Entity B]  
...etc.
```

Describing an entity as a flat record

Record for 'Entity A':

Element 1 : Literal value

Element 2 : [access point, identifier, or link that stands in
for Entity B]

...etc.

ENTITIES

GUIDANCE

POLICIES

RESOURCES

All

Search



Welcome back, **Elisa**

Last Toolkit Release: 2025-10

Recently Viewed

Element: place of publication

2026/01/31 11:20:31 EST

Guidance: Describing a manifestation

2026/01/31 11:18:47 EST

News

All News >

Learning Resources

Online resources about cataloguing and data creation using RDA exist to support teaching and training activities. We welcome [suggestions for](#)

Log into RDA Toolkit: <https://access.rdatoolkit.org>

ENTITIES

GUIDANCE

POLICIES

RESOURCES

All ▾

Search

 Download PDF[Guidance](#) > [Resource description](#) > [Describing a manifestation](#)

Describing a manifestation

Select Policy Statement Set (3)

LC-PCC PS



Table of contents


Example of a Guidance page

- [Relating a manifestation to associated works, expressions, agents, places, and timespans](#) →
- [Cardinality restrictions for specific kinds of manifestation](#) →
- [Describing a manifestation that is issued in only one physical or logical unit](#) →
- [Describing a manifestation that is issued in two or more](#)

place of publication

Recording

Record this element as a value of Place: [appellation of place](#) or as an IRI.

 Example


For a variation in a value of this element that is associated with a unit or iteration of a manifestation that embodies a *diachronic work*, see Guidance: Resource description. Describing a manifestation. [Describing a manifestation of a diachronic work](#).

CONDITION

Two or more values for this element appear in the *source of information*.

CONDITION OPTION

Record the value that appears first.

 Example

Montréal

Interpreting instructions

Instructions appear against the white background of the RDA Toolkit.

Click on “Example” (blue box with an eye icon) to expand it.

If all conditions in a Condition box (orange box) are met, you can choose to apply a condition option (indented grey box) if it falls within your community’s practice.


Describing a manifestation

A manifestation that embodies two or more expressions of distinct works is an *aggregate*. An aggregate also embodies the one and only *aggregating expression* of an *aggregating work*.


CONDITION

A manifestation is an *aggregate*.

CONDITION OPTION

Record information about one or more of the expressions that are embodied using Manifestation: [note on manifestation](#) .

CONDITION OPTION

Relate the manifestation to the aggregating expression using Manifestation: [expression manifested](#) .

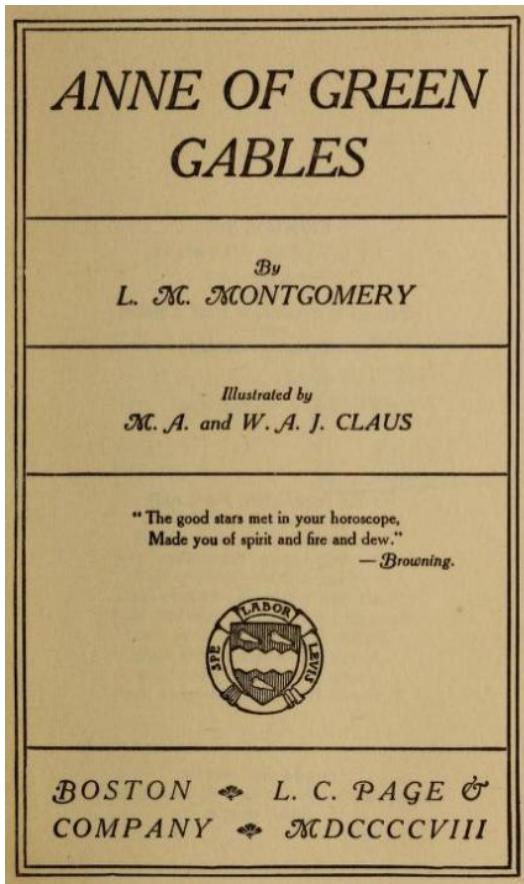
Interpreting instructions

Specialized terms in RDA Toolkit appear in *italics*. You can look up these terms in the **Glossary**, which can be searched from within the Toolkit.

Interpreting instructions

Instructions in RDA Toolkit are organized by 4 **recording methods**:

- **Unstructured description** – text transcribed (copied) from a source, or a description in the cataloguer's own words
- **Structured description** – values come from a *vocabulary encoding scheme* (a controlled vocabulary) or constructed using a *string encoding scheme* (follows a syntax)
- **Identifier** – a string of characters that uniquely identify an entity within a given system
- **IRI** – unique links for use within linked data applications



Recording methods (Examples)

Recording an unstructured description:

By L. M. Montgomery

[statement of responsibility copied directly from the title page]

Recording a structured description:

Montgomery, L. M. (Lucy Maud), 1874-1942

[author person recorded using an access point for person, LCNAF]

Recording an identifier:

anneofgreengable00mont_11

[Internet Archive identifier for manifestation for the scan]



Download PDF

[Guidance](#) > [Resource description](#) > [Describing a manifestation](#)

Describing a manifestation

Table of contents

- [Relating a manifestation to associated works, expressions, agents, places, and timespans](#)
- [Cardinality restrictions for specific kinds of manifestation](#)
- [Describing a manifestation that is issued in only one physical or logical unit](#)
- [Describing a manifestation that is issued in two or more physical or logical units](#)
- [Describing a manifestation that embodies only one expression](#)
- [Describing a manifestation that embodies two or more expressions](#)
- [Describing a manifestation of a diachronic work](#)

Set (3)

RDA element sets:

Manifestation properties

Properties that represent the attribute and relationship elements of the RDA Manifestation entity.

Number of active elements:	409
Namespace:	http://rdaregistry.info/Elements/m/
Version:	v5.4.11
Suggested prefix*:	rdam
Example curie:	rdam:P30276

* registered at prefix.cc

Languages

Arabic Catalan Chinese (Simplified) Danish Dutch **English**
 Estonian Finnish French German Greek Hungarian Italian
 Latvian Norwegian Spanish Swedish Turkish Vietnamese

Downloads

CSV (text/csv) [English language only]
JSON-LD (application/json application/json+ld)
N-Triples (text/rdf+nt)
RDF/XML (application/rdf+xml)

Semantics

Each property in the canonical element set (where applicable):

has a domain of the class that represents the Manifestation entity.

is linked from its child **datatype** property in Manifestation

RDA Registry:
<https://www.rdaregistry.info>

Examples of RDA elements

place of publication = “A place that is associated with the publication, release, or issuing of a published manifestation.”

In RDA Toolkit = “[place of publication](#)”

In RDA Registry = “[has place of publication](#)” (CURIE = rdam:P30088)

Maps to:

- IFLA LRM label “[has association with place](#)” (CURIE = lrm:R33)
- MARC 21 Bibliographic 260 \$a, 264 *1 \$a, 500 \$a, 542 \$k, 008/15-17, or 044 \$a \$b \$c
- (no DCMI term for place of publication)

Examples of RDA elements

name of publisher = “A name of an agent who is responsible for publishing a manifestation.”

In RDA Toolkit = “[name of publisher](#)”

In RDA Registry = “[has name of publisher](#)” (CURIE = rdam:P30176)

Maps to:

- IFLA LRM label “[is associated with res](#)” (CURIE = lrmer:R1)
- DCMI term “[Publisher](#)”
- MARC 21 Bibliographic 260 \$b, 264 *1 \$b, or 542 \$k

Examples of RDA elements

date of publication = “A timespan during which a published manifestation is published, released, or issued.”

In RDA Toolkit = “[date of publication](#)”

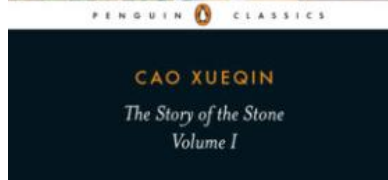
In RDA Registry = “[has date of publication](#)” (CURIE = rdam:P30011)

Maps to:

- IFLA LRM label “[has association with time-span](#)” (CURIE = lrm:R35)
- DCMI term “[Date Issued](#)”
- MARC 21 Bibliographic 260 \$b, 264 *1 \$b, or 542 \$k

Example: A book with the title proper

The story of the stone



- Published in Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England, by Penguin Classics, from 1973 to 1986.
- Published in 5 volumes.
- This publication (a *manifestation*) embodies an English translation by David Hawkes and John Minford (an *expression*) of 紅樓夢 (Hóng lóu mèng), an 18th-century Chinese novel (a *work*) by 曹雪芹 (Cáo Xuěqín).
- Through other English translations, the novel has also been known in English by the title *Dream of red mansions*.

Example: A book with the title proper

The story of the stone



<has place of publication>

Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England

unstructured description

<has name of publisher>

Penguin Classics

unstructured description

<has date of publication>

1973-1986

unstructured description

Example: A book with the title proper

The story of the stone



A conventional database or catalogue might look like this:

Field Label	Value
Place of publication	Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England
Name of publisher	Penguin Classics
Date of publication	1973-1986

Example:

RDF/XML of the single statement

The story of the stone
has place of publication
Harmondsworth
(London, England)
(highly simplified)



```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="UTF-8"?>
<rdf:RDF
  xmlns:rdf="http://www.w3.org/1999/02/22-rdf-syntax-ns#"
  xmlns:rdfs="http://www.w3.org/2000/01/rdf-schema#"
  xmlns:rda="https://www.rdaregistry.info/Elements/m/#">

  <!-- Subject: The story of the stone-->
  <rdf:Description rdf:about="https://id.loc.gov/resources/instances/3627547.html">
    <rdfs:label>The story of the stone</rdfs:label>

    <!-- Predicate: has place of publication -->
    <!-- Object: Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England-->
    <rda:P30088 rdf:resource="https://id.loc.gov/authorities/names/n82005864.html"/>
  </rdf:Description>

  <!-- Predicate: place of publication property -->
  <rdf:Description rdf:about="https://www.rdaregistry.info/Elements/m/#P30088">
    <rdfs:label>has place of publication</rdfs:label>
  </rdf:Description>

  <!-- Object: Harmondsworth (London, England) -->
  <rdf:Description rdf:about="https://id.loc.gov/authorities/names/n82005864.html">
    <rdfs:label>Harmondsworth (London, England)</rdfs:label>
  </rdf:Description>

</rdf:RDF>
```

structured description

IRI

4. Planning a training program:

Things to consider

- Dedicate training time to navigate the RDA Toolkit
 - Guidelines and instructions are found in 3 kinds of pages: element pages, Entity pages, and Guidance
- Guidance pages to read first: “Introduction to RDA”, “Objectives and principles governing RDA”, “Data elements”, “Terminology”, “User tasks”, and “Well-formed RDA”.
- Practice using different recording methods, before using the RDA Toolkit in depth.
- Train with an application profile or template that defines the elements to record and their recording methods.

4. Planning a training program: Highlighting element definition and scope, domain and range

- **Domain** = the RDA entity being described by the element
- (No range because not a relationship)
- **Alternate labels** = other labels by which this element is often know
- **Mappings** to Dublin Core Terms, IFLA LRM, and MARC 21 when mapping exists

Entities > [Manifestation](#) > [carrier type](#)

carrier type

Definition and Scope

A categorization reflecting the format of the storage medium and housing of a carrier in combination with the type of intermediation device required to view, play, run, or otherwise access the content of a manifestation.

Element Reference

IRI

<http://rdaregistry.info/Elements/m/P30001>

Domain

[Manifestation](#)

Alternate labels

has carrier type

type of carrier

category of carrier

+ [Dublin Core Terms](#)

+ [IFLA LRM](#)

+ [MARC 21 Bibliographic](#)

4. Planning a training program: Highlighting element definition and scope, domain and range

- **Domain** = the RDA entity being described by the element
- **Range** = the other RDA entity in the relationship
- **Alternate labels** = other labels by which this element is often know
- **Mappings** to Dublin Core Terms, IFLA LRM, and MARC 21 when mapping exists

Entities > Manifestation > date of publication

date of publication

Definition and Scope
A timespan during which a published manifestation is published, released, or issued.

Element Reference

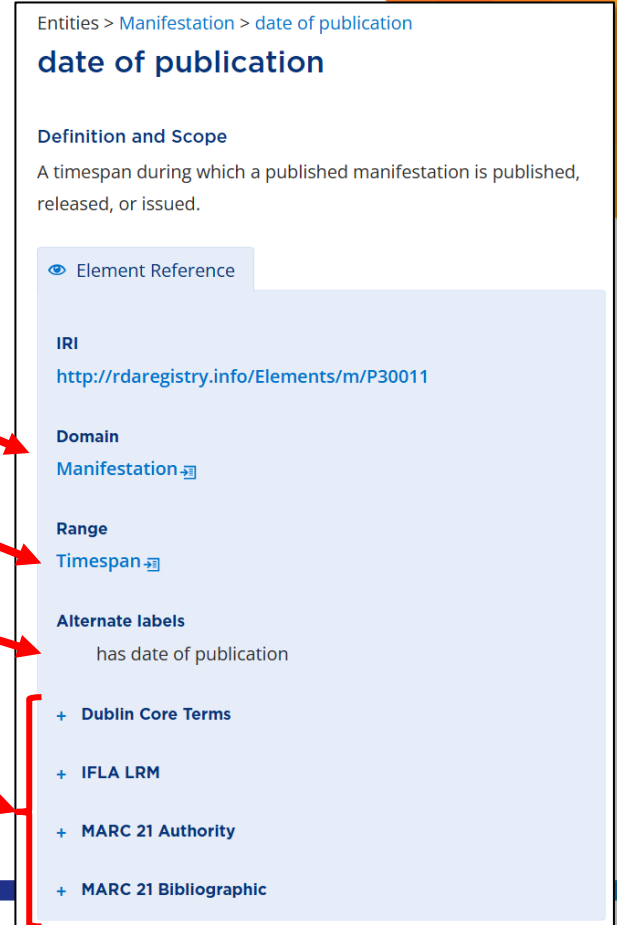
IRI
<http://rdaregistry.info/Elements/m/P30011>

Domain
[Manifestation](#)

Range
[Timespan](#)

Alternate labels
has date of publication

- + [Dublin Core Terms](#)
- + [IFLA LRM](#)
- + [MARC 21 Authority](#)
- + [MARC 21 Bibliographic](#)



4. Planning a training program: Element supertypes/subtypes

- Some RDA elements can have “broader” elements (“element supertype”) or “narrower” elements (“element subtype”).
- Communities can decide how “broad” or “narrow” an element they want to use.
- Communities should provide an **application profile** to tell cataloguers which elements to use.

author person

Related Elements

For broader elements, see

Work: [author agent](#)

Work: [creator person of work](#)

For narrower elements, see

Work: [librettist person](#)

Work: [lyricist person](#)

Work: [rapporteur person](#)

Work: [screenwriter person](#)

For the inverse of this element, see Person: [author person of](#)

4. Planning a training program: Element supertypes/subtypes

Scenario: Cataloguer is recording a value for author person.

Cataloguer may also need to **check guidelines at the broader element creator person of work** (to determine when someone is considered a creator of a work) or **author agent** (to confirm if “author...” is the right relationship or another relationship is more suitable).

author person

Related Elements

For broader elements, see

Work: [author agent](#) →

Work: [creator person of work](#) →

For narrower elements, see

Work: [librettist person](#) →

Work: [lyricist person](#) →

Work: [rapporteur person](#) →

Work: [screenwriter person](#) →

For the inverse of this element, see Person: [author person of](#) →.

4. Planning a training program: Relationship designators are now elements

“Original” RDA Toolkit
Appendix I & J terms are
now relationship
elements.

Search for the element in
the “Official” RDA Toolkit.

This is now an element: author
agent (or one of its subtypes
such as author person)

1.2 Relationship Designators for Agents Associated with a Work

1.2.1 Relationship Designators for Creator 2013/07 DACH

Record an appropriate term from the following list with the authorized access point or identifier for a creator of a work (see 19.2 RDA). Apply the general guidelines on using relationship designators at 1.1 RDA.

architect: An agent responsible for creating an architectural design, including a pictorial representation intended to show how a building, etc., will look when completed.
Reciprocal relationship: architect of.

landscape architect: An architect responsible for creating landscape works.
Reciprocal relationship: landscape architect of.

artist: An agent responsible for creating a work by conceiving, and often implementing, an original graphic design, drawing, painting, etc.
Reciprocal relationship: artist of.

book artist: An artist responsible for creating art works that exploit the book form or alter its physical structure as part of the content.
Reciprocal relationship: book artist of.

calligrapher: An artist responsible for creating a work of calligraphy where the focus of interest lies in the aesthetic value of its penmanship or graphic artistry, regardless of whether the same person, etc., also authored the inscribed text.
Reciprocal relationship: calligrapher of.

sculptor: An artist responsible for creating a three-dimensional work by modeling, carving, or similar technique.
Reciprocal relationship: sculptor of.

author: An agent responsible for creating a work that is primarily textual in content, regardless of media type or genre. Creation of a new work by paraphrasing, rewriting, or adapting works by another creator, if the modification has substantially changed the nature and content of the original or changed the medium of expression, is included.
Reciprocal relationship: author of.

5. Supports for trainers

RDA
Resource Description & Access
TOOLKIT

RDA Teaching & Training Tips
January 2024
By Elisa Sze, Education & Orientation Officer, RDA Steering Committee

This handout offers tips for educators and trainers who plan to incorporate RDA into a course or training program on knowledge organization, metadata schemas, or resource description (including cataloguing).

For questions or comments about this handout, email the author at elisa@rdatoolkit.org.

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Why teach RDA?

RDA is a package of data elements, guidelines, and instructions for creating library and cultural heritage resource metadata that are well-formed according to international models for user-focused linked data applications. RDA is both backwards compatible and future facing because it can be used in many data environments to produce flat file data, bibliographic/authority data, data in relational/object-oriented databases, or linked open data. Since 2010, RDA has been adopted in 6 continents, and remains an important standard for libraries.

RDA is regularly updated and accessed through the **official RDA Toolkit**. Users of the original RDA Toolkit (2010-2020) will find that the architecture of the site has changed, but the resulting RDA data will look nearly the same. As Chris Oliver states in *Introducing RDA: A Guide to the Basics After 3R*, **RDA in the original RDA Toolkit and in the new RDA Toolkit is fundamentally the same. It is developed following the same objectives and principles. There are new aspects, but it also continues to support the same ways of working as in the original RDA Toolkit**.¹

The official RDA Toolkit complies with current web accessibility standards while improving maintenance of the standard. The alignment with IFLA's **Library Reference Model (LRM)**, which superseded the Functional Requirements models, and internationalization efforts have contributed new concepts and terminologies to RDA, but the essence of RDA is unchanged.

¹ Chris Oliver. *Introducing RDA: A Guide to the Basics After 3R* (Chicago: ALA Editions, 2021), vii.

See “RDA Teaching & Training Tips” handout for ideas around education and orientation.

Go to <https://rdatoolkit.org>

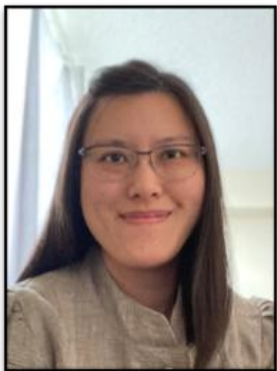
→ Click on the “Learning Resources” (top menu button)

→ Resources for educators

→ “RDA teaching & training tips” handout

→ *Template Teaching Slides* -- You are welcome to translate, adapt, or re-use.

Thank you!



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