RDA in Europe (and the World)

Introduction to RDA:
General information about the standard

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R | D | A
Resource Description & Access

Agenda

1. Why use RDA?
   - Basis in IFLA *International Cataloguing Principles* (ICP) and *Library Reference Model* (LRM)
   - Compatibility with other standards
2. What are RDA entities?
3. What are RDA elements?
4. Planning a training program
5. Resources for orientation

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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.

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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 data.

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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.

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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/unimarctomarc21.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).

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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

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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

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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

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2. What are RDA entities?

RDA Toolkit is the utility that provides guidelines and instructions on how to describe these entities.

Work

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Place

RDA refinements of
Collective Agent

Family

Corporate Body

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3. What are RDA elements?

- **Elements** are used to describe an *entity*.
  - **Attribute element** = a characteristic of an *entity* (Example: "media type" of a *manifestation*, or "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.*
  - Examples of a *metadata description set*: a bibliographic record, or an authority record.
- In linked data applications, elements and values of elements can come from different sources or be re-used.

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Displaying entities and relationships as a diagram

Literal value

element 1

Entity A

element 2

inverse of element 2
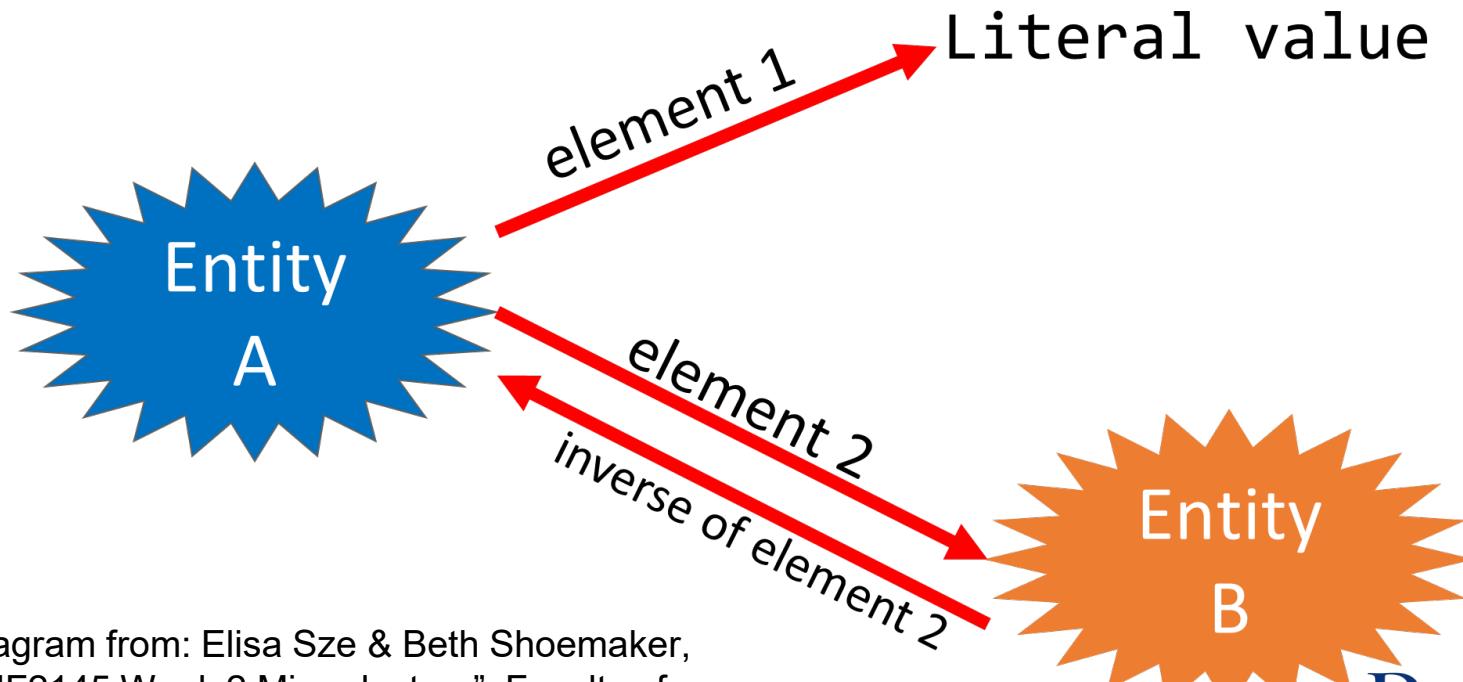
Entity B

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

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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.
```

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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.*

RDA TOOLKIT

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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

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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**

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Interpreting instructions

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

- 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.

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Interpreting instructions

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** ⊞.

- 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.

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Site Language
✔ English
Catalan
Finnish
French
Norwegian
Spanish

RDA Language
✔ English
Catalan
Finnish
French
Norwegian
Spanish

Font Size
Normal

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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)

Elements▾ Values▾ Data▾ Tools▾ About▾ GitHub Project▾ RDA Toolkit

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

Using RDA Registry as a multilingual lexicon
Example: RDA Toolkit label "title proper"
RDA Registry CURIE (Compact URI) rdam:P30156

English	Hungarian	Latvian	Greek
has title proper	főcíme a következő:	pamatnosaukums	έχει κύριο τίτλο

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 = lrmer:R33)
- MARC 21 Bibliographic 260 $a, 264 *1 $a, 500 $a, 542 $k, 008/15-17, or 044 $a $b $c
- (no directly matching DCMI term for place of publication)

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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 = lrmer:R35)
- DCMI term "Date Issued"
- MARC 21 Bibliographic 260 $b, 264 *1 $b, or 542 $k

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Example: A book with the title proper *The Transylvanian trilogy*
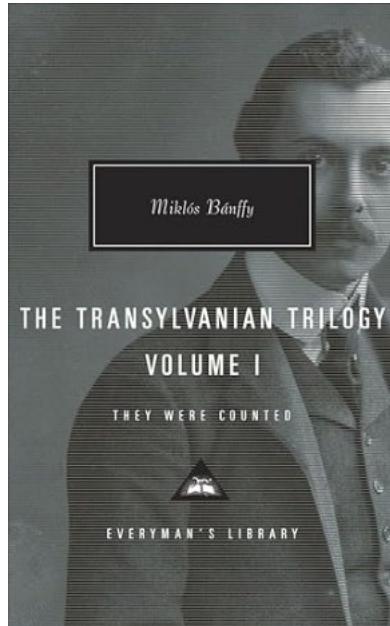
- Published in New York by Alfred A. Knopf in 2013.
- This manifestation (a publication) embodies an English translation (an expression) of *Erdélyi történet*, which is a literary work by Hungarian writer Miklós Bánffy.
- This manifestation was issued as 2 physical units (the first part of the trilogy is published as one unit, the second and third parts are combined in the other unit).

Example: A book with the title proper *The Transylvanian trilogy*
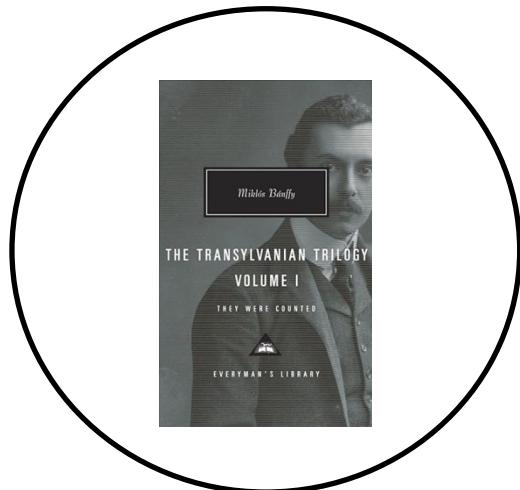
\<has place of publication\> rdam:P30088
New York

\<has name of publisher\> rdam:P30176
Alfred A. Knopf

\<has date of publication\> rdam:P30011
2013

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Resource Description & Access

Example: A book with the title proper
The Transylvanian trilogy
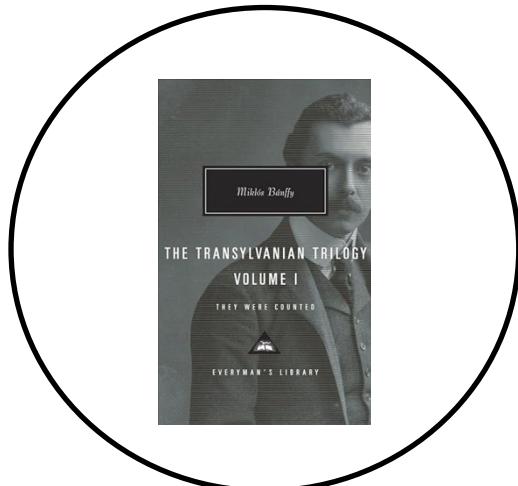
A conventional database input might look like this:

Field Label	Value
Place of publication	New York
Name of publisher	Alfred A. Knopf
Date of publication	2013

A local public display might be configured to show:

Publication information	New York : Alfred A. Knopf, 2013

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Example:
RDF/XML of the single statement [The Transylvanian trilogy](#) has place of publication New York (N.Y.)
(highly simplified)
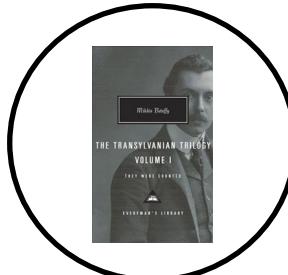
```xml
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="UTF-8"?>
<rdf:RDF
    xmlns:rdf="http://www.w3.org/1999/02/22-rdf-syntax-ns#"
    xmlns:rdfs="http://www.w3.org/2000/01/rdf-schema#"
    xmlns:rda="https://www.rdaregistry.info/Elements/m/#">

  <!-- Subject: The Transylvanian trilogy -->
  <rdf:Description
rdf:about="https://id.loc.gov/resources/instances/17719987.html">
    <rdfs:label>The Transylvanian trilogy</rdfs:label>

    <!-- Predicate: has place of publication -->
    <!-- Object: New York (N.Y.) -->
    <rda:P30088 rdf:resource="http://id.loc.gov/authorities/names/n79007751"/>
  </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: New York (N.Y.) -->
  <rdf:Description rdf:about="http://id.loc.gov/authorities/names/n79007751">
    <rdfs:label>New York (N.Y.)</rdfs:label>
  </rdf:Description>

</rdf:RDF>
```

Example:

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="UTF-8"?>
<rdf:RDF
```
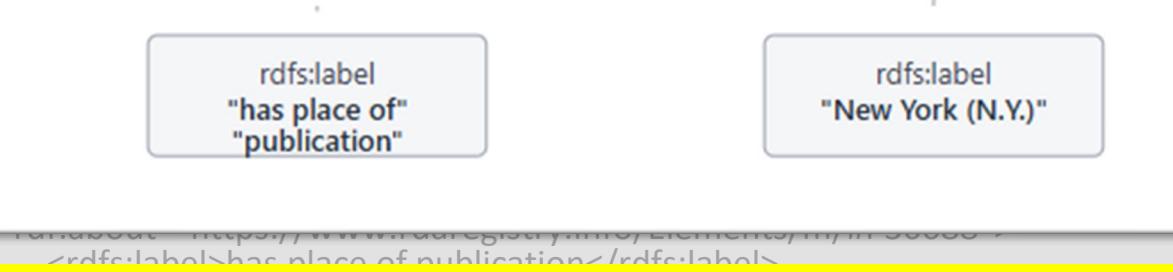
RDF Graph Visualization generated using Claude.ai (26 January 2026) for demonstration only.

```
</rdf:RDF>
```

4. Planning a training program:
Things to consider

- Dedicate training time to navigating 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 actual RDA Toolkit to record values for actual elements.
- Train with an application profile or template that defines the elements to record and their recording methods.

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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: <u>author agent</u> (or one of its subtypes such as <u>author person</u>)

I.2   **Relationship Designators for Agents Associated with a Work**

I.2.1   **Relationship Designators for Creator** `2013/07` `D·A·CH`

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 **I.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.

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5. Resources for orientation

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

Go to https://rdatoolkit.org

→ Learning Resources

→ Resources for educators

→ RDA teaching & training tips

→ Additional supports also exist.

Thank you!
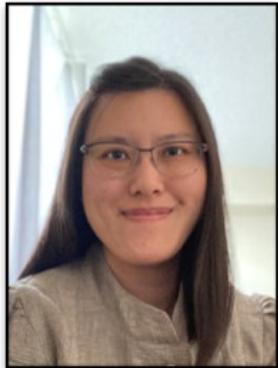
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