

To: RDA Steering Committee
From: Anne Welsh, RSC Secretary
Subject: FT2025-5 – Fast track proposal – Addition of the term “keyboard reduction score” to the RDA Format of Notated Music VES

Abstract

The text below sets out the decisions taken by the RDA Steering Committee during its meeting, 14-17 July 2025 (RSC/Minutes/521-537¹ Item 526.3). The fast track proposal was prepared by Chelsea Hoover and Keith Knop, MLA CMC Content Standards Subcommittee and sponsored by Chris Holden, RSC Technical Team Liaison Officer and Robert Maxwell, RSC North America Representative. It recommended that **keyboard reduction score** be added to the RDA Format of Notated Music VES with the proposed definition of “a format of notated music that consists of a score showing all solo instrument parts, with the instrumental accompaniment reduced for keyboard or other chordal instrument”.

Background

The Format of Notated Music VES is relevant to multiple parts of RDA. Beyond recording Expression: *format of notated music* as its own element, it is also referred to in instructions on recording the number of units in Manifestation: *extent of manifestation*, on recording dimensions of multiple unit carriers in Manifestation: *dimensions*, and on recording a Manifestation: *designation of edition*.

Issue

A comparison of the terms and definitions in the RDA Format of Notated Music VES² with the MARC 21 specifications for field 008 byte 20 and 006 byte 3³ makes the ancestry of the VES extremely clear. There is, however, one MARC term for which there is no equivalent in the Format of Notated Music VES:

c - Accompaniment reduced for keyboard

Score with instrumental accompaniment reduced for keyboard(s). For chorus scores and vocal scores prefer codes h (Chorus score) and k (Vocal score).

¹ Owing to the timeline to the next Toolkit release, this Fast Track document was prepared alongside the Minutes and published slightly ahead of them. You can browse for the Minute at <https://www.rdatoolkit.org/rsc/RSCminutes> or run a phrase search for RSC/Minutes/521-537 at <https://alair.ala.org/home>.

² <http://www.rdaregistry.info/termList/formatNoteMus/>

³ <https://www.loc.gov/marc/bibliographic/bd008m.html>

The Music Library Association recommends the addition of the term **keyboard reduction score** with definition “a format of notated music that consists of a score showing all solo instrument parts, with the instrumental accompaniment reduced for keyboard or other chordal instrument.

Impact Statements

The use of the term **keyboard reduction score** as an equivalent term in the Format of Notated Music VES for the MARC fixed field term **c-Accompaniment reduced for keyboard** will enable this specific class of musical resources to be more accurately described and distinguishable from full scores. The use of this term will also mitigate logical inconsistencies with edition statements in RDA.

The addition of this term, however, would also impact data in legacy records for this class of scores. This is because catalogers must record terms from the Format of Notated Music VES in both MARC 300 \$a and MARC 348 \$a, and “score” has traditionally been recorded for this class of scores in subfield \$a of these MARC fields in lieu of a more adequate VES term. If “keyboard reduction score” is added to the VES, the term in MARC 300 \$a and MARC 348 \$a for these records would need to be converted from “score” to “keyboard reduction score”. An MLA Content Standards Subcommittee member also noted that human review and intervention will still be required in some cases, as there are discrepancies between the applications of RDA Format of Notated Music VES terms by publishers and their respective RDA definitions.

Decisions

The RSC thanked the Music Library Association for bringing to its attention this issue, which in turn highlighted that there is work to be done on the RDA Format of Notated Music VES. This is timely, since the RSC is in the process of establishing its Music Working Group. In its discussion of the Fast Track, the RSC concluded that it should ask the members of the Music Working Group to consider the VES. In the meantime, the voting members of the RSC approved the recommendation in FT2025-5 unanimously. The following change will be made as soon as practicable.

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In the RDA Format of Notated Music VES add the term and definition as follows.

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Term: keyboard reduction score

Definition: a format of notated music that consists of a score showing all solo instrument parts, with the instrumental accompaniment reduced for keyboard or other chordal instrument.