

To: RDA Steering Committee
From: Anne Welsh, RSC Secretary
Subject: Guidelines for Discussion Papers, Proposals, and Responses to Them

This document provides formatting guidelines for preparing a discussion paper or proposal to recommend changes to RDA content. Also included are guidelines for preparing responses to discussion papers or proposals. [It updates RSC/Operations/5/24](#) and differs from it in changing the form of the numbering to reflect current practice. Paragraph numbers have been added for referencing purposes.

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1 General

- 1.1 The RSC makes all discussion papers and proposals, as well as formal written responses to them, publicly available for review and discussion of their substance. By submitting a document, the submitter acknowledges that the RSC may post the document in full on its website.
- 1.2 For clarity and ease of reference, a standard format will be used for all documents submitted to the RSC. All discussion papers, proposals, and responses to them must be written in clear English, with unambiguous wording. Care must be taken to use specific RDA terminology in the correct context.

- 1.3 Before submitting a discussion paper or proposal, all papers involving element or entity semantics should be vetted by the Technical Working Group to ensure semantic integrity with RDA before they get to final draft stage.
- 1.4 Where examples are to be edited or moved (e.g. from base RDA to Community Resources), the RDA Examples Editor should be consulted as soon as possible for advice.
- 1.5 Discussion papers and proposals should conform to the guidelines below. See additional guidance in RSC/Operations/4: Policies and Procedures for Updating RDA Content.

2 Discussion Papers

- 2.1 Discussion papers must include:
 - An abstract that explains the purpose of the paper
 - A background statement
 - An explanation of the issues under discussion
 - Impact statements covering the following areas¹:
 - Impact of proposed change(s) on users
 - Impact of proposed change(s) on cataloguers
 - Impact of proposed change(s) on legacy data
 - Impact of proposed change(s) on RDA
- 2.2 Substantial changes to RDA content should come to the RSC as a discussion paper first and not as a proposal.
- 2.3 Discussion papers may suggest a need for investigation of issues related to RDA development, identify issues related to other standards, raise and address questions, etc.
- 2.4 Discussion papers may include tentative recommendations, an analysis of the impact of making the potential changes, a list of additional considerations, and discussion questions.
- 2.5 Options in discussion papers should be presented as votable propositions; this will allow the RSC to make decisions between multiple viable options.

3. Proposals

¹ In the event that the proposed change(s) does not impact on one of these areas, the discussion paper writer(s) should include the heading and record “No impact foreseen.”

3.1 Proposals must be based on the latest version of RDA from RDA Toolkit and must include:

- An abstract that highlights the major changes of the proposal
- A justification for the suggested revision, including a statement of the issue(s) requiring resolution
- An estimate of the impact of the proposal, including the impact on policy statement writers and translators, and if other elements or guidance chapters would be affected.
- Impact statements should cover the following areas²:
 - Impact of proposed change(s) on users
 - Impact of proposed change(s) on cataloguers
 - Impact of proposed change(s) on legacy data
 - Impact of proposed change(s) on RDA
- Clearly identified and numbered recommendations specifying the additions or revisions to RDA, framed as votable propositions
- Marked-up copy that uses strikeout for deletions and double underlining for additions, and a corresponding clean copy of the proposed changes; do not use the “track changes” feature in word processing software.

3.2 Proposals may articulate a minority position from the group making the proposal.

3.3 If there are revised proposals, they will be numbered based on the original document, with the addition “/rev” to the document name (see [Section 4](#) below). The beginning of the document must include an explanation of the revision.

4. Responses

4.1 Responses will be numbered based on the original document, with the addition of “[role]” (see [Section 5](#) below). Responses must include:

- An explicit response to each recommendation identified in the proposal
- An explicit statement regarding whether the proposal is accepted or rejected.

4.2 If there are revised responses, they will be numbered based on the original document, with the addition of “/rev2” [etc.] to the original response (see [Section 5](#) below). A revised response must include, at the beginning of the document, a summary of what was revised.

5 Document Numbering

² In the event that the proposed change(s) does not impact on one of these areas, the proposer(s) should include the heading and record “No impact foreseen.”

- 5.1 All documents will bear standard information in the upper right-hand corner of each page:
- RSC document number, with the following elements, separated by slashes:
 - RSC
 - Brief name of proposing individual or group, e.g., “Chair”, “EURIG”, “TechnicalWG”
 - Year
 - Sequential number from that group, which re-starts every year Examples:
RSC/Chair/2025/1
RSC/EURIG/2024/3
RSC/TechnicalWG/2025/3
 - Date of the document, in the form Day Month Year (e.g., 27 May 2019)
 - Page number (e.g., page 1 of 4, page 1/4)
 - An appropriate extension if the document is a response or a revision Examples:
RSC/Chair/2020/2/rev
RSC/Chair/2020/2/rev2
RSC/EURIG/2025/1/ORDAC
- 5.2 If the RSC document contains another document and the conveyed document has its own internal number, it is not necessary to renumber the document with the RSC numbering.

6 Document Heading

All documents will include the following:

To: RDA Steering Committee
From: [name of proposing individual or group]
Subject: [brief descriptive title]

7 Best Practices

- 7.1 RDA elements, entities, and guidance chapters referenced within the text of discussion papers and proposals should be formatted as actionable links. To find the link, highlight the relevant text in RDA Toolkit. In the resulting pop-up toolbar, select the chain image (second from the right), and then click the “copy” button in the “Create Link” box. Links are preferred to citation numbers.

- 7.2 Any use cases presented should be articulated with well-formed RDA in mind.

- 7.3 It is helpful to include:

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- A list of affected elements (including inverses)
- A reference to related document(s), as appropriate, with document number(s)

7.4 Before submitting the final discussion paper or proposal, the author should:

- Be certain they are relying on element definitions rather than element labels for understanding
- Eliminate restrictive assertions
- Eliminate examples quoting MARC 21 or other encoding practices
- Replace vague statements about next steps with specific recommendations.