

To: Renate Behrens, Chair, RDA Steering Committee

CC: Anne Welsh, Secretary, RDA Steering Committee

From: Jessica Grzegorski, RDA Examples Editor

Subject: Formal response to RSC/TechnicalWG/2025/1, Discussion paper on soft-deprecated parallel elements

I thank the Technical Working Group for their detailed discussion paper and the care with which they compiled multiple scenarios and examples. The examples in the discussion paper demonstrate that cataloging outcomes could remain essentially unchanged, regardless of the RDA implementation scenario, even if the path to those outcomes changes. Deprecating the parallel elements would also have the effect of streamlining the RDA element set.

However, the loss of parallel elements could have a negative effect on how users identify and understand certain resources. For truly multilingual resources in which no single language predominates (e.g., treaties, government publications issued by jurisdictions with more than one official language), parallel elements are often unnecessary. But in other cases, one language does predominate in a multilingual work, even if very slightly. Duplicating the **Manifestation: title proper** element, for example, to accommodate parallel titles would not capture this aspect of the resource. Using **Manifestation: other title information** or **Manifestation: variant title of manifestation** similarly does not capture the prominence of a parallel title on a source of information versus other kinds of titles or title information.

Expanded use of manifestation statements to represent a resource with greater accuracy is useful in theory but challenging in practice. It is true that manifestation statements preserve information in multiple languages in the order and context in which it is found in a source. But what about the role of layout and typography? The order of text on a resource is not the only indication of what is a title proper, for example, and a manifestation statement cannot generally capture visual nuances. What about cartographic and still images, in which information is often scattered across the resource? Our cataloger's judgment guides us in using the "sequence, layout, or typography of the source of information" (a phrase that appears often in the Toolkit) to make decisions about the information we record.

In theory, manifestation statements will provide a more accurate representation of a source of information than is available otherwise. But consider early printed and other types of rare

materials. Many have long and complex titles, statements of responsibility, and publication statements. This means that catalogers would have to enter the same information twice, once for the manifestation statements and once for the more structured elements (e.g., title proper, designation of edition, etc.), but not always in exactly the same way (i.e., not always a simple “copy and paste”). We are also limited by the typographical facilities available to us. It is unlikely, for example, that we could reproduce content such as early modern letterforms, brevigraphs, and symbols in a manifestation statement. If we could digitize and accurately OCR every source of information, we could more easily generate manifestation statements (or supply the digitized resource as a sort of replacement for a manifestation statement). Although technology does not and should not fully dictate the development of metadata standards, we cannot completely ignore it in the context of the practical implementation of RDA.

Although the paper notes that the National Library of New Zealand has opted not to use parallel elements, which is reflected in its policy statements, no other policy statement sets in RDA have followed suit. For example, of the eight policy statements published for **Manifestation: parallel title proper**, seven have opted to use the element, even though the option to use **Manifestation: title proper** instead has been available for several years. If parallel elements are still in active use and they do not contradict the LRM, I do not think it is necessary to deprecate them. They provide flexibility to metadata creators who wish to use them while not preventing others from taking the approaches outlined in the discussion paper.