

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/2026/6, Soft-deprecated parallel elements

The Examples Editor thanks the Technical Team Liaison Officer and the Technical Working Group for their deep consideration of community needs and thorough analysis of methods for recording parallel values in metadata description sets. I have no objection to the technical grounds of the proposal or its commitment to the principle of internationalization. I agree that metadata standards should take care not to create an artificial hierarchy of languages when parallel values are present on a resource. My reservations stem, rather, from practical use cases and demonstrated community need and continued use of the parallel elements.

There are many examples of real-world multilingual resources in which a single language predominates, whether by content or by layout/typography on a manifestation.

Examples include journals in which the title and abstracts are in two languages but the articles are in only one of the two languages. Several manifestation elements in the Toolkit provide the option to record "one or more values separately in the order indicated by the sequence, layout, or typography of the source of information," providing flexibility, for example, in recording a title that clearly predominates by its layout and typography as a title proper and the less prominent title in another language as a parallel title proper. In these cases, the manifestation itself is suggesting a "hierarchy" of languages in the context of a given resource. The ability to use our catalogers' judgment in this way supports, rather than contradicts, the principle of representation.

Relying on manifestation statements to accurately record parallel values is time-consuming and inadequate for many resources.

Manifestation statements may accurately record the sequence of a value but they do not accurately record layout and typography. On maps and still images, for example, such statements may be scattered throughout a manifestation. It is difficult to imagine how and in what order to record these statements, particularly when parallel values are present. We are also limited by our own typographical facilities. For example, catalogers may not have the ability to reproduce symbols and certain types of early modern letterforms in transcriptions.

Furthermore, to make a description that is useful to end users, catalogers would need to enter the same information twice--once for manifestation statements and once for more structured elements (e.g., Manifestation: title proper)--but not in exactly the same way. This is a time-consuming process that also invites errors, especially when a resource includes long and complex titles and publication statements.

Parallel elements are still in wide use across numerous and varied cataloging communities.

Of all the current policy statements sets in Official RDA, only one set instructs catalogers not to use parallel elements, in spite of the fact that the option not to use parallel elements has been available for many years. The remaining sets of policy statements are contributed by different linguistic, cultural, and subject domain communities rather than limited to one or two specialist communities. In this sense, the option to use parallel elements contradicts neither the LRM nor RDA's principle of internationalization.

The parallel elements all have a suitable broader element for communities that choose not to implement them. Just as catalogers have the flexibility, for example, to choose between using broader and narrower agent elements (e.g., Person: artist person vs. Person: sculptor person), catalogers should also have the same level of flexibility with parallel elements. If the parallel elements are retained, nothing forbids communities from choosing to use their broader elements instead.

If parallel elements continue in wide use, moving the parallel elements to the legacy area of the Toolkit bifurcates instructions in a way that may be confusing or cumbersome for catalogers.

Moving AACR2 instructions to the legacy Community Resources area made perfect sense. Those instructions are specific to a particular linguistic community, and their presence in the base RDA text would be out of step with the principle of internationalization. However, moving the parallel elements to this area does not quite fit within the same logic, especially if they continue to be used by multiple and diverse communities. The proposal's strong arguments for retaining the parallel element instructions in the legacy area, and acknowledgment of many communities' preference for retaining them, underscore their ongoing relevance within the base RDA text.

Recommendations 1.1-1.28: Fully deprecate parallel elements.

Reject.

Recommendation 2: Remove the *Alignment from soft-deprecated to recommended elements* from the Registry and publish *Alignment from deprecated to recommended elements* in its place.

Reject.

I support removing the soft-deprecated status from parallel elements and fully incorporating them into the RDA element set.