

To: RDA Steering Committee

From: Renate Behrens, RSC Chair

Subject: String Encoding Scheme Working Group, May 2026-2028

This document sets out the membership, terms of reference, and specific tasks for the String Encoding Scheme (SES) Working Group.

The purpose of the SES Working Group is to support the improvement of the RDA standard. The primary deliverables are discussion papers or proposals (or both, broken into manageable pieces, if needed) to raise issues of concern for consideration by the RSC and to move forward with implementation of the AUQ (aspect-unit-quantity) model.

1 Background

As Official RDA is implemented by increasing numbers of cataloguing institutions worldwide, the RSC receives enquiries from members of the RDA cataloguing community that query the use of String Encoding Schemes. Some of these query which SES they might consider using. Others query the presence of String Encoding Schemes within the text of RDA as a legacy of Original RDA and AACR2. There is a clear need to analyse the current presence of SES within Official RDA and to advise the RSC on routes forward to make the text as coherent and the use of SES as consistent and transparent as possible.

More urgently, the SES Working Group picks up the baton from the Extent Working Group, which was discharged in April 2026 having completed the maximum term (plus extensions) for a Task and Finish Working Group under [RSC/Operations/3](#), under whose terms the Extent Working Group operated. Its discharge document ([RSC/Chair/2026/8](#)) is one of the key resources for the SES Working Group.

The tasks of the Working Group are set out below. The immediate focus of the group should be to prepare proposals in the direction of travel agreed by the RSC in its January 2026 meeting ([RSC/Minutes/556-584](#)).

2 Membership

Thomas Brenndorfer, Canada, Chair

Gordon Dunsire, UK
Ebe Kartus, Australia
Keith Knop, USA

Getaneh Alemu, Wider Community Engagement Officer, *ex officio*
Jessica Grzegorski, RDA Examples Editor, *ex officio*
Christopher Holden, Technical Team Liaison Officer, *ex officio*
Elisa Sze, Education and Orientation Officer, *ex officio*
James Hennelly, Director of ALA Digital Reference, *ex officio*

3 Terms of Reference

The Working Group operates within [RSC/Operations/3](#), the general terms of reference for RSC Working Groups. As a task-and-finish group, the Working Group has a two-year term, May 2026-May2028

4 Tasks

1. Draft proposals based on the Decisions Documents for the proposals submitted by the Extent Working Group, which established the direction of travel for Extent (see key resources).
2. The expectation of the RSC is that proposals for (1) will be submitted at regular intervals, with the first proposal(s) submitted in July 2026 for discussion at the November 2026 meeting¹.
3. Once the Extent proposals have been carried forward (and only once the Extent proposals have been carried forward), review the text of the Official Toolkit and identify places in which String Encoding Schemes are used, including examples that use SES.
4. Review the text of the Official Toolkit and identify places in which String Encoding Schemes are not used but in which cataloguing institutions have a need to use SES.
5. Prepare a discussion paper for the RSC which reports on the findings of 3 and 4 and recommends next steps.

¹ The Technical Team Liaison Officer has agreed to assist with this, and the RSC Secretary is always happy to provide information on the next slot(s) for proposals in RSC Meetings.

6. Once activities 1-5 have been completed, and next steps have been agreed, the Terms of Reference will be updated². It is expected that the next steps will comprise the production of discussion papers and proposals to improve the coherence and transparency of the use of SES in RDA.
7. The Chair is expected to provide written interim reports for the November 2026 and November 2027 meetings of the RSC as well as a final report for the April 2028 meeting of the RSC³. The RSC Chair will check in with the Chair of the Working Group ahead of other RSC Meetings and ask for more informal updates.

5 Reference sources

- [RSC/Chair/2026/8](#) – Discharge of Extent Working Group *and all documents referenced within it*, since these support the Extent proposals which are to be drafted and submitted (Tasks 1 and 2 above).
- [RSC/ExtentWG/2025/1/Decisions](#) This is expected to form the basis of RSC/SESWG/2026/1 – Proposal for Manifestation: extent of manifestation and Manifestation: manifestation extent statement⁴.
- [RSC/ExtentWG/2025/2/Decisions](#)⁵
- [RSC/ExtentWG/2025/3/Decisions](#)⁶
- [RSC/ExtentWG/2025/4/Decisions](#)⁷
- [RSC/ExtentWG/2025/5/Decisions](#)⁸
- [RSC/ExtentWG/2025/6/Decisions](#)⁹
- [RSC/ExtentWG/2025/7/Decisions](#)¹⁰
- [RSC/ExtentWG/2025/8/Decisions](#)¹¹
- [6JSC/ALA/Discussion/1](#) – Machine-Actionable Data Elements in RDA: Discussion Paper (2013) and responses (available at the same link on ALAIR).

² Terms of Reference may also be updated when the membership changes. Terms of Reference for most Working Groups are updated annually, and it is to be expected that the RSC Secretary will wish to update all Working Group Terms of Reference documents when the new RSC Chair assumes their position in January 2027.

³ The Technical Team Liaison Officer has agreed to help with this. The RSC Secretary is always happy to supply the final date for submission of reports for RSC Meetings.

⁴ The RSC Chair is expecting to table this for discussion at the November Meeting of the RSC, and the RSC Secretary requests that you submit it by 1 July 2026 so that it can be introduced at the Public Session of the July 2026 Meeting for discussion at the November 2026 RSC Meeting.

⁵ This is under preparation by the RSC Secretary and will be published as soon as possible.

⁶ This is under preparation by the RSC Secretary and will be published as soon as possible.

⁷ This is under preparation by the RSC Secretary and will be published as soon as possible.

⁸ This is under preparation by the RSC Secretary and will be published as soon as possible.

⁹ This is under preparation by the RSC Secretary and will be published as soon as possible.

¹⁰ This is under preparation by the RSC Secretary and will be published as soon as possible.

¹¹ This is under preparation by the RSC Secretary and will be published as soon as possible.

- [6JSC/ALA/Discussion/5](#) – Machine-Actionable Data Elements for Measurements, Extent of the Carrier, Pagination and Foliation, Dimensions, Extent of the Content, and Duration – Discussion Paper (2015) and responses (available at the same link in ALAIR)
- [6JSC/ALA/17](#) – Machine-Actionable Data Elements in RDA Chapter 3: Discussion Paper (2012) and responses (available at the same link in ALAIR)