

To: RDA Steering Committee

From: Elisa Sze, Education and Orientation Officer
Chris Holden, Technical Team Liaison Officer
Damian Iseminger, Past Technical Team Liaison Officer

Subject: Proposal to revise Guidance: Aggregates and Guidance: Diachronic Works following from RSC/TechnicalWG/2024/2/rev/Decisions

Abstract

This proposal puts forward revisions that are intended to clarify existing instructions under Guidance: Aggregates. [Describing an aggregate](#) and Guidance: [Diachronic works](#). The revisions are intended to help cataloguers navigate more easily from the associated Guidance chapters to the relevant instructions on describing aggregates and diachronic works.

Background

At the November 2024 RSC meeting, [RSC/TechnicalWG/2024/2/rev Proposal to revise definitions of aggregate, aggregating work and Aggregates Guidance](#) was approved with amendments, as summarized in the corresponding [decisions document](#). As part of the approval, two action items for Elisa Sze, Education and Orientation Officer, and Damian Iseminger, then Technical Team Liaison Officer, were identified:

1. Review the existing paragraphs beginning “It is not necessary” as a separate future proposal ([RSC/Minutes/483-499](#) Item 485.1.3.3).
2. Find a place elsewhere in the Toolkit to include the edge case of an aggregate that embodies a single expression ([RSC/Minutes/483-499](#) Item 485.1.3.4).

The revisions proposed in this document acknowledge the gap identified in current instructions, and are intended to help cataloguers navigate more easily from the associated Guidance chapters to the relevant instructions on describing aggregates and diachronic works.

Impact statements

Impact of proposed changes on users

The proposed changes are not anticipated to impact users directly.

Impact of proposed changes on cataloguers

The proposed changes are intended to clarify the requirements for a well-formed metadata description set, and direct cataloguers on the relevant Guidance: Resource Description sections to consult following a reading of Guidance: Aggregates and Guidance: Diachronic Works.

This proposal does not propose to change RDA elements or to alter the Aggregates model.

Impact of proposed changes on legacy data

No impact on legacy data is expected, given that no changes are being proposed to RDA elements.

Impact of proposed changes on RDA

The proposed changes do not alter the Aggregates model or change existing RDA elements. The proposed changes also preserve the approved changes documented in [RSC/TechnicalWG/2024/2/rev/Decisions](#). However, communities that maintain policy statements or external guidance documents are encouraged to review this proposal for potential impact on community instructions. If approved, translators working on full translations of RDA will need to incorporate the changes into their translation of Guidance: Aggregates and Guidance: Diachronic Works.

Proposal

1. Review the existing paragraphs beginning “It is not necessary” as a separate future proposal (RSC/Minutes/483-499 Item 485.1.3.3).

In the Aggregates Guidance, “[Describing an aggregate](#)” section, the paragraphs beginning “It is not necessary...” were flagged by NARDAC as unclear. As stated in [RSC/TechnicalWG/2024/2/rev/NARDAC response](#), “The phrase ‘it is not necessary’ in this section does not provide sufficient context – not necessary for what? How does this relate to minimum description, coherent description, effective description, or well-formed RDA?”

A keyword search of the word “necessary” in RDA Toolkit shows that the word “necessary” is most often used in the context of recording instructions found in various element pages. Below is a short selection of such instructions (the list is not exhaustive):

- “necessary for identification...”
- “necessary to combine or consolidate...”

- “necessary to determine...”
- “if necessary to clarify the role of...”
- “if necessary to distinguish between...”
- “if necessary, add a word to indicate...”

To answer the original question “necessary for what?” the following revision is proposed for the [“Describing an aggregate”](#) section.

Recommendation 1: Revise the section [“Describing an aggregate”](#) in the Aggregates Guidance to clarify the requirements in the context of a well-formed metadata description set.

Marked-up version

[RDA 88.10.69.84](#) **Describing an aggregate**

~~It is not necessary to record~~ A well-formed metadata description set does not require all of the expressions or works that are embodied by an aggregate to be recorded.

~~It is not necessary to record~~ If the aggregating expression or work is recorded, a well-formed metadata description set does not require any of the expressions or works that are aggregated if the aggregating expression or work is to be recorded.

If at least one of the expressions or works that are aggregated is recorded, a well-formed metadata description set does not require ~~It is not necessary to record~~ the aggregating expression or work to be recorded ~~if at least one of the expressions or works that are aggregated is recorded~~.

For general guidance and instructions on recording a description of an aggregate, see Guidance: Resource description. Describing a manifestation. [Describing a manifestation that embodies two or more expressions](#).

For general guidance and instructions on recording a description of an aggregating expression or an expression that is aggregated, see Guidance: Resource description. Describing an expression. [Describing expressions of aggregating works and expressions that are aggregated](#).

For general guidance and instructions on recording a description of an aggregating work or a work that is aggregated, see Guidance: Resource description. Describing a work. [Describing aggregating works and works that are aggregated](#).

For general guidance and instructions on recording a well-formed metadata description set, see Guidance: [Well-formed RDA](#).

Clean version

Describing an aggregate

A well-formed metadata description set does not require all of the expressions or works that are embodied by an aggregate to be recorded.

If the aggregating expression or work is recorded, a well-formed metadata description set does not require any of the expressions or works that are aggregated to be recorded.

If at least one of the expressions or works that are aggregated is recorded, a well-formed metadata description set does not require the aggregating expression or work to be recorded.

For general guidance and instructions on recording a description of an aggregate, see Guidance: Resource description. Describing a manifestation. [Describing a manifestation that embodies two or more expressions](#).

For general guidance and instructions on recording a description of an aggregating expression or an expression that is aggregated, see Guidance: Resource description. Describing an expression. [Describing expressions of aggregating works and expressions that are aggregated](#).

For general guidance and instructions on recording a description of an aggregating work or a work that is aggregated, see Guidance: Resource description. Describing a work. [Describing aggregating works and works that are aggregated](#).

For general guidance and instructions on recording a well-formed metadata description set, see Guidance: [Well-formed RDA](#).

2. Find a place for the edge case of an aggregate that embodies a single expression

The edge case identified during the November 2024 RSC meeting discussion centered on the following scenario: A work that is planned to be a successive aggregating work is manifested in its first issue; for unforeseen reasons, no further issues are published. The single issue itself only manifests a single expression of a single work.

The edge case described can only arise in the context of a diachronic work.

Moreover, in the modeling of aggregating works and diachronic works, both types of works are treated in essence as *plans*, not outcomes. In other words, a diachronic work remains a plan, whether or not that plan is carried out, and the attributes that make a work a diachronic work are not altered even when the original plan is no longer being realized or publication stops.

It is worth noting that current instructions under Guidance: Describing a Work. [Describing a successive aggregating work](#) already provide condition-options on:

- how to relate a successive aggregating work to one or more static works that are aggregated, and
- how to relate a successive aggregating work to one or more successive works that are aggregated.

Other subpages of Guidance: Resource Description provide further instructions on describing diachronic works, expressions of diachronic works, and manifestations embodying diachronic works. Thus, rather than introduce new instructions for how to describe the edge case identified, the following paragraphs are being suggested as additions to the end of Guidance: [Diachronic works](#).

Recommendation 2. Add to the end of Guidance: [Diachronic works](#) references to existing Guidance: [Resource Description](#) sections.

Marked-up version

[Add after the current last paragraph, [RDA 84.42.90.34](#) “For guidance and instructions on the criteria that are used to determine that a work is distinct from other works, see Work. Entity boundary.”]

For general guidance and instructions on recording a description of a specific diachronic work, see:

- Guidance: Resource Description. [Describing a work](#).
 - [Describing a diachronic work](#)
 - [Describing an integrating work](#)
 - [Describing a successive work](#)
 - [Describing a successive aggregating work](#)
 - [Describing a serial work](#)

For general guidance and instructions on recording a description of an expression that realizes a diachronic work, see Guidance: Resource Description. Describing a work. [Describing an expression of a diachronic work](#).

For general guidance and instructions on recording a description of a manifestation that embodies a diachronic work, see Guidance: Resource Description. Describing a manifestation. [Describing a manifestation of a diachronic work](#).

Clean version

[Add after the current last paragraph, “For guidance and instructions on the criteria that are used to determine that a work is distinct from other works, see Work. Entity boundary.”]

For general guidance and instructions on recording a description of a specific diachronic work, see:

- Guidance: Resource Description. [Describing a work](#).
 - [Describing a diachronic work](#)
 - [Describing an integrating work](#)
 - [Describing a successive work](#)
 - [Describing a successive aggregating work](#)
 - [Describing a serial work](#)

For general guidance and instructions on recording a description of an expression that realizes a diachronic work, see Guidance: Resource Description. Describing a work. [Describing an expression of a diachronic work](#).

For general guidance and instructions on recording a description of a manifestation that embodies a diachronic work, see Guidance: Resource Description. Describing a manifestation. [Describing a manifestation of a diachronic work](#).