

21 September 2025

To: RDA Steering Committee  
From: NARDAC  
Subject: Scope note for Corporate Body

## Background

When the contents of Original RDA were transferred to Official RDA during the 3R Project, two paragraphs from Identifying Corporate Bodies, 11.0, Purpose and scope, were omitted:

Typical examples of corporate bodies are associations, institutions, business firms, nonprofit enterprises, governments, government agencies, projects and programs, religious bodies, local church groups identified by the name of the church, and conferences.

Ad hoc events (e.g., athletic contests, exhibitions, expeditions, fairs, and festivals) and vessels (e.g., ships and spacecraft) are considered to be corporate bodies.

IFLA-LRM includes this information in its definition and discussion of the entity [\*Collective Agent\*](#), LRM-E8<sup>1</sup>:

The entity collective agent designates a wide range of named groups of persons that bear a particular name and have the potential of acting together as a unit. ... Occasional groups and groups that are constituted as meetings, conferences, congresses, expeditions, exhibitions, festivals, fairs, etc., ... fall under the definition of collective agent as long as they are identified by a particular name and can act as a unit. ... A gathering of people is considered a collective agent only when it exhibits organizational characteristics that permit them to perform actions that reflect agency with respect to instances of entities of bibliographic interest (such as approving a report, publishing the proceedings of a conference).

NARDAC thinks the information that “ad hoc events ... and vessels” (in Original RDA’s language) are instances of the *Corporate Body* entity is important. It isn’t readily apparent from the conceptual definition given in Official RDA under Definition and Scope that some of these should be treated as corporate bodies (e.g., an exhibit, a ship, a spaceship, a race). IFLA-LRM covers what Original RDA called “ad hoc events” in the language about “occasional groups”. Vessels also fall within the IFLA-LRM discussion: a vessel is “a gathering of people ... that exhibits organizational characteristics that permit them to perform actions that reflect agency,” e.g., the production of the vessel’s log.

It seems possible that these omissions were intentional as part of the 3R Project, perhaps made in the interest of internationalization or generalization. The collective memory of NARDAC is

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<sup>1</sup> Note from RSC Secretary: link to <https://www.iflstandards.info/lrm/lrmer#E8> added for the convenience of RSC members.

unable to recall any such intent, however, and we point out that the omissions not only omitted parts of Original RDA, but also omitted parts of IFLA-LRM as cited above. If the information was intentionally omitted, the omission does not seem justified by IFLA-LRM, the model on which Official RDA is based.

We also acknowledge that it is possible that these omissions were intentional as part of the 3R Project in the interest of regularizing the structure of the entity pages. Most of the other entity pages only contain “includes” under definition and scope where they list narrower elements (e.g. under *Agent*). (We note, however, that the “includes” list under *Nomen* does not name specific RDA elements but is a general list of the types of things that might be a nomen.) Nevertheless, if regularization of the presentation of the entity definitions was the actual intent, NARDAC believes that, because of the potential for confusion about what constitutes a corporate body, an exception is warranted in this case.

During the 3R Project, RSC discussed adding a new entity for occasional groups as a refinement of *Collective Agent*. The minutes of the October 2019 RSC meeting state: “The RSC will consider setting up a working group to explore creating a separate entity to represent occasional groups in RDA” (180.6). As far as we can tell, a working group was not set up and this idea was never explored, and in any case would not have included the issue of vessels (see 180.5). NARDAC is not opposed to reviving this idea, but believes a simpler solution is the one incorporated in this proposal.

We propose that language be reinstated in Official RDA clarifying the inclusion of events and vessels as instances of the *Corporate Body* entity. We acknowledge that IFLA-LRM includes these with its definition and discussion of *Collective Agent*, and that Official RDA also includes an entity *Collective Agent*. If the language is reinstated, however, we believe it is more appropriate with the RDA-specific entity *Corporate Body* rather than incorporating it into RDA’s *Collective Agent*. However, if RSC would prefer to incorporate the language NARDAC proposes under Definition and Scope of *Collective Agent* instead of *Corporate Body*, NARDAC is not opposed.

We note that it is unclear what value the Original RDA phrase “ad hoc” adds. The phrase has multiple meanings and many people assume that it means “on the fly” or “on the spur of the moment” rather than “created or done for a particular end or purpose.” We judge that the phrase “ad hoc” is not meaningful in the context of the cataloging guidelines and propose not retaining it.

## **Impact statements**

### ***Impact of proposed changes on users***

None.

### ***Impact of proposed changes on cataloguers***

None. Reinstating the language simply clarifies that, in agreement with IFLA-LRM, there is no

change in practice from that under Original RDA.

***Impact of proposed changes on legacy data***

None.

***Impact of proposed changes on RDA***

Changes are required to the glossary and purpose and scope language under the entity *Corporate Body*.

**Recommendation 1. Under Entities > [Corporate Body](#) revise the definition and scope by adding a scope note:**

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**Definition and Scope**

A collective agent who is composed of persons who are organized for a common purpose or activity. A corporate body includes an association, institution, business firm, nonprofit enterprise, government, government agency, project or program, and a religious body, including one identified by the name of a local place of worship. Corporate body also includes a formally named and convened event such as a conference, athletic or other contest, exhibition, expedition, fair, or festival, and a vessel such as a ship or spacecraft.

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**Recommendation 2. Revise the glossary entry for *Corporate Body* by adding a scope note.**

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