

To: RDA Steering Committee
From: Renate Behrens, RSC Chair
Subject: Operations for Voting Members Discussing Changes to the Text of RDA

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1 Introduction

The RDA Steering Committee (RSC) is constituted in the [RDA Agreement](#) (2018) which governs the development of *RDA: Resource Description and Access*.

This document outlines operational policies and procedures for the RSC. It consists of information formerly in [RSC/Operations/6](#) and from a best practices document that was privately circulated (not published) and reuses the title RSC/Operations/3, which previously covered *General Terms of Reference for RSC Working Groups* and was subsumed by [RSC/Operations/1/2026 – Structure of the RSC and Guide to its Operations](#). The change in the structure of the Operations Documents reflects a need observed by the RSC Chair and Secretary for RSC members and others to find information at speed. It is important to note that there are no changes in the way the RSC conducts its operations. Changes to the Operations Documents this year (2026) are superficial, changing the order of the information in them, not the information itself.

The RSC Secretary was approved to edit the Operations Documents at the November 2025 RSC Meeting ([RSC/Minutes/538-555](#) Item 554). At the January 2026 RSC Meeting ([RSC/Minutes/556-584](#) Item 559) a change in the cycle of the review of the Operations Documents was approved so that there would no longer be a workload imbalance with the Annual Report and Action Plan. It was agreed that the Annual Report and Action Plan would be prioritised for the first meeting in the RSC calendar and the review of the Operations Documents would be carried out for the second meeting in the RSC calendar. Subsequently, the continued unbalanced workload led to the Operations Documents being presented in the July meeting.

2 Formal Responses

[RSC/Operations/2/2026](#) Section 7 covers the preparation of Formal Responses to RSC proposals and Discussion Papers.

3 Repetition of Information

The main reason that the RSC Chair and Secretary proposed the reorganization of the Operations Documents was that many RSC members found it difficult to locate the information they needed at speed. While the RSC Secretary is always happy to help RSC members with questions of procedure, as librarians it is understandable that most RSC members want to be able to locate information independently.

In order to understand the preparation of discussion papers, proposals and formal responses to them, some information about meetings is needed. Therefore, some of the information in this document duplicates some information in [RSC/Operations/2/2026](#). Operations Documents are always reviewed in number order, so the current document references [RSC/Operations/2/2026](#).

Similarly, [RSC/Operations/5/2026](#) deals with procedures for In-person and Asynchronous Meetings and references this document.

4 Formal Responses

4.1 Requirement for Voting Members to Prepare Formal Responses

As set out in [RSC/Operations/2/2026](#) Section 7.1, all voting members of the RSC (except for the submitter(s)) must provide a formal response to each proposal. Responses are not compulsory for Discussion Papers, but a voting member may choose to submit a formal response if they believe this will help discussion.

4.2 Formal Responses as Information Rich Sources of Information for Discussion

Formal responses form the bedrock of discussion in RSC Meetings. Many of them consolidate feedback from various constituencies and so are rich in information. They are also vital as they allow communities whose native language is not English the opportunity to read, translate if necessary and think about the issues raised.

4.3 Formal Responses to Discussion Papers and Free-flowing Discussion

As described in [RSC/Operations/2/2026](#) Section 7.6, all Discussion Papers and proposals are discussed in Public Session. Although there is usually a vote on issues / recommendations in Discussion Papers, the discussion of Discussion Papers is often free-flowing. At Discussion Paper stage, the RSC is seeking to capture thoughts on issues at a conceptual or broad-brush level

and then determine next steps. Formal responses are not required of RSC members for Discussion Papers.

It is worth noting here that Discussion Papers do not immediately invoke changes in RDA. Free-flowing discussion is appropriate for the discussion of big picture ideas. In terms of the internationalization principle, RSC members do think about the ease with which colleagues can follow discussions, and often we see formal responses submitted when a member knows they will be raising subtle or nuanced points. This leverages the advantages of the Formal Response to give communities whose native language is not English the opportunity to read, translate if necessary and think about the issues raised.

4.4 Formal Responses as the First Statement Topics that Will Be Raised in Discussion

As set out in [RSC/Operations/2/2026](#) Section 7.6, all proposals receive formal responses from voting members of the RSC. It is very unusual for a member of the RSC to raise an issue in verbal discussion that they have not first raised in their formal response. They do sometimes respond to an issue raised in another RSC member's formal response, but it is rare indeed for an RSC member to raise a brand new issue in discussion, and might be considered slightly bad form to do so.

4.5 Best Practice for RSC Members: Indicate in Your Formal Response the Issues You Know You Will Raise in Discussion

In terms of best practice, in preparing a formal response, RSC members try to anticipate what they will wish to say in discussion and make it as easy for their colleagues to be prepared. As well as assisting everyone to prepare for the discussion, formal responses and the summary the RSC Secretary makes of them, are vital to the RSC Chair in allocating an appropriate amount of time to the discussion of each proposal.

5 Open Communication

The RSC is committed to open communication about issues under discussion.

5.1 RSC Meeting Agenda

As well as Formal Responses, RSC members are encouraged to submit topics for RSC Meeting agendas. The RSC Chair decides on the agenda for each meeting, and actively welcomes suggestions for topics from RSC members. They also solicit topics from Working Group Chairs. The wider RDA cataloguing community can request a topic be discussed by the RSC. They can contact their Regional Representative, the Wider Community Engagement Officer, RSC Secretary or RSC Chair in the first instance.

5.2 In-person Meeting Agenda and Outreach and Training Event

One of the many benefits of in-person meetings is the opportunity to work specifically with the host to highlight topics of interest within their country. This is usually apparent in the agenda of the RSC Meeting is certainly an important aspect of the outreach and training event that is co-organised by hosts and the RSC.

5.3 Asynchronous Meeting Agenda and Public Sessions

Asynchronous Meetings always include a Public Session. Alongside discussion of proposals, there is often an outreach and training component. The current focus is on the implementation of RDA, but the RSC Chair and Secretary are always happy to hear from members of the wider RSC community about topics they would like to be covered. The training and outreach component of online RSC Public Sessions is usually recorded and made available on the RDA Toolkit YouTube channel.

5.4 Minutes and Decisions Documents

The RSC Secretary prepares Minutes which are published after approval by the RSC. They also prepare a Decision Document for each proposal and Fast Track proposal. These are published on the RSC website and archived to ALAIR. The focus of the Minutes is decisions and actions. They do not record word-for-word what each member of the RSC says in any discussion, but they do offer a brief summary of each discussion and its outcome.

5.5 Best Practices for RSC Members: Open Communication

5.5.1 Agenda

Make suggestions for agenda items as soon as possible. You can approach the RSC Chair and Secretary at any time with suggestions. There is also the opportunity to raise a topic under AOB (Any Other Business). AOB items are usually last-minute / *ad hoc*. Prefer to let the Chair and Secretary know about a topic as soon as you think of it / your constituency raises it with you, since that gives everyone more time to prepare for the discussion, but be aware that AOB is an option.

5.5.2 Reading Formal Responses

Set aside time to read other members' Formal Responses. The RSC Secretary prepares a summary document to aid the Chair in preparing for the meeting. This is published and you can use it too. Prefer to read all the Formal Responses yourself, since they are published as soon as the Secretary receives them. By reading the Formal Responses as they are published, you will be able to see the issues your colleagues are likely to raise. Some Formal Responses are very nuanced, and you can take your time to read them. If a topic is raised in a Formal Response that you have not considered yourself, you can then think about it and be prepared for the discussion.

5.5.3 Reading the Summary Document

Set aside time to read the Summary Document. Its table indicates how many members have said they approve / approve with amendments / reject each recommendation. You can see the topics that are likely to receive most discussion (usually the recommendations in which there are Formal Responses that approve with recommendations). The Notes on each indication pull together topics in which different Formal Responses have raised the same issue in each recommendation. If you feel the Secretary has made a mistake in representing your Formal Response, let them know as soon as possible so they can correct it and issue a revised summary document. Mistakes of this kind are rare, but the Secretary is a human being so they could make a mistake and if they do they will be glad of the correction.

5.5.4 Responding in the Meeting

The RSC Chair always asks the proposer / writer of the Discussion Paper to introduce it. Usually this is a repetition of what you already know. However, the issues raised in the introduction highlight areas in which the proposer / writer accepts outright a change suggested in a Formal Response. The introduction also gives an indication of the areas in which the proposer / writer thinks discussion is most needed. After the introduction, the Chair always opens for comments from the RSC. Before raising your hand, think about whether your issue is one of the areas the introduction has highlighted. If it is, then raise your hand and raise your issue. If not, wait until the highlighted issues have been discussed first. Before moving to a vote, the Chair will check if anyone has any further issues to raise, so do not worry about whether your issue(s) will be discussed. They will.

5.5.5 Privilege of Language

The RSC does not have a budget for simultaneous interpreters in its meetings. English is the business language of RSC meetings. If you are a native or native-level speaker of English, please be aware of your privilege in meetings, and particularly in synchronous meetings where verbal communication is used. It is exhausting to speak in a non-native-level language all day, and in in-person meetings, some colleagues spend four full consecutive days conversing in a language that is not their own. In setting the agenda, the RSC Chair takes this into account. If you need a discussion to slow its pace (because of language issues or for any other reason) please let the RSC Chair know. They do their best to keep discussion at a pace that works for everyone and will be grateful for any feedback about speed. All RSC members are happy to clarify or repeat their statements as needed. As a native or native-level speaker of English, you can assist your non-native-level English speaker colleagues not only by speaking clearly but also by providing pause after a question is asked to allow people who are using their second or third or fourth or fifth language time to think about the question and perform any language interpretation they need in order to respond.