

To: RDA Steering Committee

From: Chris Holden, Technical Team Liaison Officer and Chair of the Technical Working Group

Subject: RSC/TechnicalWG/2025/1 – Discussion paper on soft-deprecated parallel elements

Introduction and Background

History of Parallel Elements

Official RDA currently has 28 parallel elements:

parallel designation of edition
parallel designation of named revision of edition
parallel name of distributor
parallel name of distributor of
parallel name of manufacturer
parallel name of manufacturer of
parallel name of producer
parallel name of producer of
parallel name of publisher
parallel name of publisher of
parallel other title information
parallel other title information of series
parallel place of distribution
parallel place of distribution of
parallel place of manufacture
parallel place of manufacture of
parallel place of production
parallel place of production of
parallel place of publication
parallel place of publication of
parallel statement of responsibility relating to edition
parallel statement of responsibility relating to named revision of edition
parallel statement of responsibility relating to series
parallel statement of responsibility relating to title proper
parallel title of series
parallel title of series of
parallel title proper
parallel title proper of

All of these elements were “soft-deprecated” during the 3R Project, meaning that they still appear in official RDA, but in the Toolkit there is an option under Prerecording that states: “Do not use this element; use [another element] instead to record a value.”

The concept of parallel elements has a long history in cataloging. When catalogs were structured as physical cards filed in alphabetical order, it was necessary to render many elements non-repeatable, so that a single string existed as the “primary element” and ensured that the card would be filed in the correct location. The ISBD consolidated edition, AACR2, and original RDA all define the “title proper,” for example, as “the chief name” of a resource, whereas the “parallel title proper” is a version of the title proper “in another language or script.” The usage of “chief” to describe the title proper implies a hierarchy in which the title proper takes precedence over the parallel title proper, and its status as a non-repeatable element made it particularly important in cataloging; the MARC21 encoding standard, for example, defines the 245 \$a subfield for title proper as non-repeatable.

However, changes in technology and cataloging practice have led to a reconsideration of these hierarchies. In a linked data context, individual parallel elements can be presented devoid of context and may not be particularly helpful to the end user when divorced from their partner elements. The recent ISBD for Manifestation standard, for example, does not define any parallel elements. Official RDA still supports the International Cataloguing Principles’ principle of representation (“*A description should represent a resource as it appears*”), but accomplishes this through the **Manifestation: manifestation statement** element, which more accurately enables a cataloger to record how the manifestation represents itself. The **Manifestation: manifestation statement** element allows different statements in parallel languages and scripts to appear in full context and without the atomization of assigning each piece of the manifestation statement to a different element or parallel element. The former requirement to sort all components as they appear on the manifestation being described into various other elements, and to string them together into one coherent statement, had led to an increasingly complicated set of rules to record and represent the manifestation, particularly when many parallel elements were featured on the manifestation itself.

At the same time, Official RDA has moved towards being a standard that is agnostic on how elements are presented or displayed and relegated many of these instructions to external string encoding schemes. While older cataloging standards included instructions for both what data to record *and* how to display it, this approach does not work for a standard such as RDA, which is constructed for multiple implementation scenarios. In certain cases, such as Implementation Scenario C or D, it might be simple to construct a catalog record in which it is intuitively obvious how the parallel data recorded is related to other RDA elements. In other cases, such as Implementation Scenario A, the parallel elements may be displayed as something separate from their related counterparts, and it would not do much good to think of them as “parallel” to anything, because they would be presented devoid of context. The ISBD Consolidated defines all parallel elements as elements presented “in another language or script,” but this definition only

makes sense if there is context for what the original language or script is that the parallel elements differ from.

The RSC has been examining the possibility of fully deprecating the soft-deprecated elements in RDA, including the parallel elements (for prior discussions see [RSC/TechnicalWG/2-23/2](#) ; [RSC/Minutes/413-443/datecorrected](#) Items 415 and 417 ; [RSC/Minutes/508-520](#) Item 518 ; and [RSC/Minutes/521-537](#) Item 523). The following discussion paper is an attempt to look at how cataloging might work if the parallel elements in RDA were fully deprecated and no longer available for use.

Possibilities for an RDA element set without parallel elements

There are several possibilities for cataloging in RDA without using the soft-deprecated parallel elements. Currently, there are institutions and projects that are cataloging in RDA without these elements; one such example is the National Library of New Zealand (NLNZ), whose [policy statements and guidance](#) for RDA deliberately refrain from using any of the soft-deprecated elements in the Toolkit. Another is the [MARC2RDA project](#), whose recently-completed Phase I does not use any of the soft-deprecated RDA elements in its conversions.

One possibility for avoiding parallel elements is to take advantage of the fact that RDA makes no restrictions on the repeatability of certain elements. In the absence of parallel elements, communities could specify a string encoding scheme (SES) for the encoding and presentation of parallel data. For example, the element **Manifestation: title proper** is repeatable; the definition and scope only specify that a title proper is a nomen “selected for preference in a specific application or context.” In the context of parallel data, each language appearing on the source of information could be considered a specific context. If a community were looking to duplicate current cataloging practice for titles proper in the MARC21 encoding environment, retaining ISBD Consolidated punctuation, a SES could be defined as: “*Record multiple titles proper in different languages by separating the titles proper with a [space] = [space]. In MARC, code the first title proper in 245 \$a and subsequent titles proper in 245 \$b.*” Even more simply, a SES could point to ISBD Consolidated, with instructions such as “*Refer to the ISBD Consolidated for instructions on the display and presentation of the elements.*” The current LC-PCC Metadata Guidance Documentation does something like this; [in discussing the string encoding schemes for manifestation elements](#), it states: “*LC-PCC bibliographic descriptions in MARC records generally follow string encoding schemes that derive from ISBD: International Standard Bibliographic Description. Although Official RDA element names do not always match ISBD element names, they are similar enough that the ISBD document may be consulted without much difficulty.*”

Another possibility is to define parallel data as variants of their respective elements. In this scenario, parallel title statements not selected as the title proper could be categorized as variant titles of manifestation and recorded as such. This approach mirrors the recently-published ISBD

for Manifestation standard, which includes [examples](#) in which titles from a parallel manifestation statement are recorded as variant titles of manifestation.

In this scenario, the presentation of elements means that there will be a loss of context in how the parallel statements are related to the elements which they parallel. However, with the introduction of the manifestation statement elements in RDA, there is still a way to record how a manifestation is representing itself. The manifestation statements are ideal for showing how things like parallelisms in different languages or scripts appear and interact with one another in the manifestation. The manifestation statements preserve the context of the full statement; if atomization is desired, portions of the manifestation statement can also be recorded in other elements. For example, if there was a desire to index individual titles found on a manifestation, one could use **Manifestation: title of manifestation** to record each title, or a combination of **Manifestation: title of manifestation**, **Manifestation: title proper**, or **Manifestation: variant title of manifestation**, if categorization is desired for the construction of access points.

ISBD and Parallel Elements

As mentioned in the Toolkit's [Standards Related to RDA](#) section, the RDA element set is compatible with the ISBD Consolidated Edition published by IFLA. However, compatibility does not mean that there is a one-to-one correlation between an RDA element and an ISBD Consolidated element. In the [document](#) describing the alignment between RDA and ISBD Consolidated, it is stated that "*Harmonization does not imply that the content is identical, so variation in content should be expected, although not sufficiently different to have a significant effect.*" There are already certain elements defined in ISBD, such as "[has dependent title of title proper](#)," that are not present on the same granular level in RDA. Much as the ISBD Consolidated's "Dependent title of title proper" is aligned to the broader RDA element "has title proper," it is possible for ISBD elements such as "has parallel title" to be aligned to the broader "has title" while still retaining RDA's commitment to harmonization with ISBD Consolidated. Similar strategies can be used for the other parallel elements in ISBD Consolidated.

There are some remaining definitional issues. One is that the glossary of the ISBD Consolidated Edition (page 342) makes it clear that parallel titles are excluded from the definition of the title proper. Another is that IFLA's ISBD element set defines both "has title proper" and "has parallel title" as subproperties of "has title." In these cases, the ISBD Consolidated Edition is distinguishing a parallel title proper from a title proper in order to maintain integrity in the display of the two elements. RDA, however, is only concerned with which elements to record, and the instructions on display and presentation are consigned to external string encoding schemes. The ISBD standards for display and presentation can still be retained even while RDA interprets some manifestation information as elements that are not parallel information. This allows different implementations of RDA; multiple titles proper could be recorded, and then assembled into an ISBD-compliant SES if desired.

Examples of Cataloging Without Using Parallel Elements in the MARC 21 format

What follows is some examples of how one might take the information formerly recorded in parallel elements, and instead record them using other elements encoding in the MARC21 format.

Example 1: Parallel Title Proper

Manifestation statement: Literatuur en muziek\\Literature and music

Scenario 1: Applying a string encoding scheme to multiple titles proper

Manifestation: title proper: Literatuur en muziek

Manifestation: title proper: Literature and music

(SES applied to multiple title proper elements to produce the following string in MARC 21)

245 0 0 \$a Literatuur en muziek = \$b Literature and music.

Scenario 2: Defining parallel title proper as a variant title of manifestation

Manifestation: title proper: Literatuur en muziek

Manifestation: variant title of manifestation: Literature and music

(Encoded in MARC21)

245 0 0 \$a Literatuur en muziek

246 3 1 \$a Literature and music

(To cite one example of cataloging practice, the current [National Library of New Zealand RDA](#) guidance includes options for both scenarios, allowing the cataloger to “record a value that is a different language version of the title proper” as both **Manifestation: other title information** and **Manifestation: variant title of manifestation**.)

Example 2: Parallel title proper with parallel statement of responsibility relating to title proper

Manifestation statement: Jean Sibelius\\Symphony no. 6\\Symphonie Nr. 6\\op. 104\\edited by/herausgegeben von\\Kai Lindberg.

Scenario 1: Applying a string encoding scheme

Manifestation: title proper: Symphony no. 6, op. 104

Manifestation: title proper: Symphonie Nr. 6, op. 104

Manifestation: statement of responsibility related to title proper: Jean Sibelius

Manifestation: statement of responsibility related to title proper: edited by Kai Lindberg

Manifestation: statement of responsibility related to title proper: herausgegeben von Kai Lindberg

(SES applied to multiple elements to produce the following string in MARC 21. This SES is based on the instructions in the [LC-PCC MGDs for string encoding schemes for manifestation elements](#), and takes into account the option under Transcription guidance for [letters or words intended to be read two or more times](#))

245 1 0 \$a Symphony no. 6, op. 104 / \$c Jean Sibelius ; edited by Kai Lindberg = Symphonie Nr. 6, op. 104 / Jean Sibelius ; herausgegeben von Kai Lindberg.

(The [current National Library of New Zealand RDA guidance](#) includes a similar instruction for recording multiple statements of responsibility relating to the title proper in an SES, with slightly different punctuation, though this guidance calls for only recording a single title proper).

Scenario 2: Treating parallel title proper as a variant title.

This scenario treats the parallel title proper as a variant title, and follows the [option](#) for “statement of responsibility relating to title proper” to “Record a value that appears in the language or script of a title proper.”

Manifestation: title proper: Symphony no. 6, op. 104

Manifestation: variant title of manifestation: Symphonie Nr. 6, op. 104

Manifestation: statement of responsibility related to title proper: Jean Sibelius

Manifestation: statement of responsibility related to title proper: edited by Kai Lindberg

Manifestation: statement of responsibility related to title proper: herausgegeben von Kai Lindberg

(Encoded in MARC21)

245 1 0 \$a Symphony no. 6, op. 104 / \$c Jean Sibelius ; edited by Kai Lindberg

246 3 1 \$a Symphonie Nr. 6, op. 104

Optionally include the other values for other title information in the manifestation statement.

881 __ \$c Jean Sibelius\\Symphony no. 6\\Symphonie Nr. 6\\op. 104\\edited by/herausgegeben von\\Kai Lindberg.

*(MARC21 does not have a field specifically defined for parallel statement of responsibility. In the absence of an additional 246 subfield, if it is desirable to record the parallel statement of responsibility somewhere outside of the manifestation statement, the parallel statement of responsibility could be recorded in the 245 \$c as part of an SES, or recorded as a **Manifestation: note on manifestation** in a 500 field)*

Example 3: Parallel other title information with no parallel title proper or parallel statement of responsibility relating to title proper

Manifestation statement: HR Giger\\die frühen Jahren\\the early years\\les jeunes années\\Charly Bieler

Scenario 1: Applying a string encoding scheme

Manifestation: title proper: HR Giger

Manifestation: other title information: die frühen Jahren

Manifestation: other title information: the early years

Manifestation: other title information: les jeunes années

Manifestation: statement of responsibility related to title proper: Charly Bieler

*(SES applied to multiple elements to produce the following string in MARC 21. This SES is similar to the instructions in the [LC-PCC MGDs for string encoding schemes for manifestation elements](#), and, with slightly different punctuation, the instructions in the current [National Library of New Zealand RDA guidance](#) [Precede second and subsequent values of Manifestation: other title information with **space colon space**]).*

245 1 0 \$a HR Giger : \$b die frühen Jahren = the early years = les jeunes années / \$c Charly Bieler

Scenario 2: Applying options in the Toolkit

This scenario applies one of the options for the [condition](#) under Manifestation: other title information: “A value of this element appears in two or more parallel languages or scripts in the source of information.”

Option: Record the value that appears first.

(Encoded in MARC21)

245 1 0 \$a HR Giger : \$b die frühen Jahren / \$c Charly Bieler.

Optionally include the other values for other title information in the manifestation statement.

881 _ _ \$c HR Giger\\die frühen Jahren\\the early years\\les jeunes années\\Charly Bieler

Example 4: Parallel title proper with parallel other title information, and a parallel designation of edition with parallel statement of responsibility related to edition.

Manifestation statement: McLaughlin's Danish-English dictionary\\in two parts\\Danish-English\\ English-Danish\\new edition, revised and improved\\by Prof. J.R. Ainsworth Davis, B.A.\\McLaughlin's ordbog\\i det\\engelske og dansk sprog\\ny udgave, revideret og forøget\\af Prof. J.R. Ainsworth Davis, B.A.

Scenario 1: Applying a string encoding scheme

Manifestation: title proper: McLaughlin's Danish-English dictionary

Manifestation: title proper: McLaughlin's ordbog

Manifestation: other title information: in two parts, Danish-English, English-Danish

Manifestation: other title information: i det engelske og dansk sprog

Manifestation: designation of edition: New edition, revised and improved

Manifestation: designation of edition: Ny udgave, revideret og forøget

Manifestation: statement of responsibility relating to edition: by Prof. J.R. Ainsworth Davis, B.A.

Manifestation: statement of responsibility relating to edition: af Prof. J.R. Ainsworth Davis, B.A.

(SES applied to multiple elements to produce the following string in MARC 21. The SES for the 245 field follows the instructions for title proper and other title information listed above. The SES for the 250 field is based on the instructions in the [LC-PCC MGDs for string encoding schemes for edition statements](#) [Use MARC 21 subfield \$b to record the statement of responsibility for the edition statement; precede the subfield \$b with a space, backslash (/), space; for parallel editions, versions, etc. precede the parallel statement by a space, equal sign (=), space]).

(Encoded in MARC21)

245 1 0 \$a McLaughlin's Danish-English dictionary : \$b in two parts, Danish-English, English-Danish = McLaughlin's ordbog : i det engelske og dansk sprog.

250 __ \$a New edition, revised and improved / \$b by Prof. J.R. Ainsworth Davis, B.A. = Ny udgave, revideret og forøget / af Prof. J.R. Ainsworth Davis, B.A.

Scenario 2: Applying options in the Toolkit

*Apply the instructions for scenario 2 in examples 1-3 for the titles proper, and other title information. Follow the [option](#) under **Manifestation: designation of edition** to "Record a value that appears in the language or script of a title proper" when the designation of edition appears in multiple languages or scripts. Follow the similar [option](#) under **Manifestation: statement of responsibility relating to edition**.*

Manifestation: title proper: McLaughlin's Danish-English dictionary

Manifestation: variant title of manifestation: McLaughlin's ordbog

Manifestation: other title information: in two parts, Danish-English, English-Danish

Manifestation: other title information: i det engelske og dansk sprog

Manifestation: designation of edition: New edition, revised and improved

Manifestation: designation of edition: Ny udgave, revideret og forøget

Manifestation: statement of responsibility relating to edition: by Prof. J.R. Ainsworth Davis, B.A.

Manifestation: statement of responsibility relating to edition: af Prof. J.R. Ainsworth Davis, B.A.

(Encoded in MARC21)

245 1 0 \$a McLaughlin's Danish-English dictionary : \$b in two parts, Danish-English, English-Danish.

246 3 _ \$a McLaughlin's ordbog

250 _ _ \$a New edition, revised and improved / \$b by Prof. J.R. Ainsworth Davis, B.A.

Optionally include a second 250 field for the edition statement in a different language

250 _ _ \$a Ny udgave, revideret og forøget / \$b af Prof. J.R. Ainsworth Davis, B.A.

Optionally include the other values for other title information, designation of edition, and statement of responsibility relating to edition in the manifestation statement.

881 _ _ \$c McLaughlin's Danish-English dictionary\\in two parts\\Danish-English\\English-Danish\\\$d new edition, revised and improved\\by Prof. J.R. Ainsworth Davis, B.A.\\\$c McLaughlin's ordbog\\i det\\engelske og dansk sprog\\\$d ny udgave, revideret og forøget\\af Prof. J.R. Ainsworth Davis, B.A.