

TO: Joint Steering Committee for Development of RDA
FROM: John Attig, ALA representative
RE: Addition to "Other Agreements involving Jurisdictions"

At the April 2007 meeting, the Joint Steering Committee accepted the recommendation of the Library of Congress (*5JSC/LC/5/Rev*, section Q) to revise the instructions for naming works comprising treaties to call for the name of the work to be the title proper or preferred title. ALA did not support this revision and reserved the right to raise the issue again.

ALA believes that the proposed change is not consistent with the basic instructions for naming works in RDA and asks the JSC to consider the following points:

1. The question of naming works comprising treaties should be decided in the context of the basic instructions for naming works in RDA. ALA therefore requests that no decision be made until a draft of chapter 13 has been made available for review.
2. ALA recommends that the instructions for naming works comprising treaties be consistent with the basic instructions for naming works in RDA.

ALA expects that those basic instructions will call for the primary access point to be the name of the creator (or possibly the name of the originating/authorizing body). We believe that this basic instruction can and should be applied to bilateral treaties. A bilateral treaty is an agreement between two parties who jointly create the work; in such cases, the title usually contains the names of the two parties.

ALA expects that the basic instruction will not be readily applicable in many cases (more than one creator; creator(s) not named; identity of creator unclear; etc.) and that additional instructions will be included to deal with these cases. We believe that those additional instructions will be applicable or adaptable to the case of treaties and will provide appropriate solutions to the difficulties posed by the exceptional instance of a bilateral treaty with missing or unclear information.

3. ALA would like to emphasize the difficulty inherent in naming a bilateral treaty by its title. Law reference librarians tell us that users rarely can provide a title when they are searching for a particular treaty. Users know the signatory parties, the general topic, and an approximate date. As we consider how to provide controlled access points for treaties, the title will not provide sufficient information for a user to find and identify the resource.

Perhaps because the title is the weakest element in identifying bilateral treaties, the standard indexes and other reference tools are also organized by signatory, followed by subject category, year, and then by title, thus recognizing that the title is the weakest element in identifying bilateral treaties.

4. Therefore, ALA repeats its earlier proposal (*5JSC/LC/5/Rev/ALA response*, section Q) that the primary access point for bilateral treaties be the name of the party named first in the title of the treaty, with appropriate instructions for dealing with cases in which the parties are not clearly named. ALA believes that this proposal will be a consistent application of the basic instructions for naming works in RDA, and urges that instructions consistent with the basic instructions for naming works in Chapter 13 be adopted in the case of bilateral treaties.
5. Further, for compilations of treaties between a single party and one or more other parties, ALA recommends that the primary access point be the jurisdiction that is the focus of the compilation. Again, we expect that this will be consistent with the basic instructions for naming works in RDA.
6. For the record, ALA agrees that the name of works comprising multilateral treaties and compilations of treaties that do not focus on a single party should be the preferred title, and that the instructions for the Holy See should be generalized to all ecclesiastical bodies with treaty-making powers.