

TO: Joint Steering Committee for Development of RDA

FROM: Alan Danskin, British Library representative to JSC

SUBJECT: Instructions for Recording Relationships: Discussion Paper.
British Library Response.

The British Library thanks ALA for this review

1. Instructions on recording relationships as structured descriptions should be added to RDA chapters 24–28. In the strawman proposal, this recommendation has been extended to include instructions on recording relationships as an identifier, authorized access point, or an unstructured description.

We agree that additional guidance would be helpful.

2. A structured description is made up of appropriate elements defined elsewhere in RDA, recorded following the instructions for recording those elements, and combined into a single composite element. This basic guideline is now stated in RDA 24.4.3.

We do not think it is correct to say that the composite description is an element in its own right, nor do we agree that RDA implies that it is. The mechanism by which the elements are assembled into a composite description is dependent on the schema.

3. Such a composite element should include an appropriate relationship designator from appendix J, in order to specify the nature of the relationship.

While this would be desirable, we are not convinced it is affordable. We think it is better to permit a non-specific relationship than to discourage the recording of any relationship by being over prescriptive.

4. A structured description of a related entity should consist of elements that record attributes of that entity

We are not in favour of strictly prescribing the components of a structured description. One of the benefits of a structured description,

is its flexibility. We can see the value for some applications of defining a core set of elements, but we do not think this should be forced on all users.

5. There should be provision for the inclusion of instructions for dealing with the description of specific types of related entities.

We are concerned about the possible growth of the instructions in this area and the risk of creating case law for specific types of entity. Clear use cases would be required to justify such a departure from general instructions.

6. The instructions for contents note for manifestations should say to record the title proper and statement of responsibility for each part of the manifestation being described and, if desired, other elements that relate to the parts (such as extent, playing time, or names of performers).

While we are in favour of meaningful and useful content statements, we are concerned that the recommendation is overly prescriptive. There are other techniques for providing comprehensive access to contents, such as fully analysing the contents or providing authorised access points for each contained resource.

7. The instruction for accompanying material statements should say to record the Extent of the accompanying manifestation, together with other identifying information (such as Dimensions), as appropriate

Generally agree.

Comments on the Strawman

1. The expansion of the instructions for each chapter (rather than reference back to 24.4) is probably helpful to the cataloguer.
2. We do not think the new instructions should be more prescriptive than the existing instructions.
3. We think that general instructions relating to Contents, Host, Accompanying Manifestation are useful reminders, but we do not believe that they should prescribe elements in detail.