

To: Joint Steering Committee for Development of RDA  
From: John Attig, ALA Representative  
Subject: Date of expression: Revision of RDA 6.10.1.1 and 6.10.1.3

ALA thanks EURIG for this expansion of the instructions relating to date of expression. ALA agrees that identifying the date of expression can be difficult and that catalogers would benefit from additional guidance. However, we agree with the Library of Congress that the addition of the type of date as a qualifier is not appropriate because it contains a mixture of expression- and manifestation-level information.

ALA supports the additional guidance that the Library of Congress proposes adding at 6.10.1.1.

ALA received a number of comments that might be of interest to the JSC. The first one is from the representative from the Online Audio-visual Catalogers:

It is desirable to be able to identify dates more specifically and a generic “date of expression” is not useful for many purposes. OLAC’s Moving Image Work-Level Records Task Force investigated ways to operationalize the date of a moving image work. We identified a number of types of dates associated with moving image works that we thought important to record. The developers of the new Fédération Internationale des Archives du Film (FIAF) rules are considering an event-based model where dates can be associated with a number of particular events in the lifecycle of a moving image.

However, while I understand and appreciate the impulse behind this proposal, I believe that the proposed direction is misguided for the following reasons.

1. At a general, philosophical level, it is unclear to me whether this level of format-specific detail is appropriate for RDA and whether it is practical to maintain this type of a system at the level of RDA. If the goal of RDA is to be a general cataloging manual, it might be more practical to maintain this sort of information in supporting, specialized manuals. There are many more types of expressions than what are listed here.

I am also unsure that such a strict hierarchy is helpful. Both OLAC and FIAF prefer the approach of recording as many types of dates as are known. The selection of a date to associate with the expression could be independent of a hierarchy and left to cataloger’s judgment or the preferences of cataloging agencies. It seems likely that different communities will have a different order of preference for types of dates.

2. If this level of detail is appropriate for RDA, there needs to be more consultation with the relevant communities. In particular, OLAC finds the list and ranking of

types of dates for moving image expressions unsatisfactory. Date of post-production is rarely known and even if it is known is usually an inappropriate choice for the date of expression. Moving image works and expressions are generally identified (both by the public and by scholars) by their year of release, often defined as the year of the first public screening. It is also bizarre to us that phonogram date is the second choice. Although moving images may have related phonogram dates, these would only be for the musical content and not for the expression as a whole, which by definition includes visual content. On the other hand, copyright date is missing despite that fact that many moving images bear copyright dates that would be appropriate to use as the basis of a date of expression in certain contexts.

3. It appears that the underlying motivation is to associate the date needed to assess the current status of copyright or IP protection with the expression. It might be better to propose a new element specifically for this purpose. Additional events, such as copyright renewal, may affect the status of intellectual property rights for an expression. The copyright status of expressions included in an aggregate work may be complicated to track.

The following comment was received from the representative of the Music Library Association:

MLA would like to point out that the assertion in the fourth paragraph of the background (“... the date of expression is rarely known as such ...”) does not represent music well. It is very common for scores to indicate the date of completion and for sound recordings to indicate recording dates.