RDA Toolkit Switchover: Beta Toolkit Becomes Official RDA

The beta version of RDA Toolkit will become the official version of the RDA standard on December 15, 2020 (around 8 pm CST (UTC -6)) in conjunction with the December release.

The beta Toolkit will "switchover" to the *access.rdatoolkit.org* URL on this date and will no longer be in beta status. The RDA text at this site after December 15 is the stable and authoritative version of the standard.

The original Toolkit will move to a new URL: *original.rdatoolkit.org*.

Both versions are accessed through an existing Toolkit subscription; a new license/subscription is not needed for the new official version. Free trial subscriptions remain on offer.

Access to the original Toolkit will continue through links in the Resources tab and in the top banner in order to support communities as they make the transition to the new version of the standard. Links to both the original Toolkit and the current beta site will still resolve to the RDA version as expected.

The original Toolkit, though, will not be available interactively forever. The switchover does NOT start the yearlong countdown clock on the original Toolkit, which will remain available at the new URL. The decision about when to begin the final countdown for removing internet access to the original Toolkit will be made by full agreement of the RDA Board and the RSC at an undetermined future time.

Implementation

The switchover date is **not** the same as an implementation date for this new version of the RDA standard.

Implementation dates will differ globally depending on a community's readiness.

Local cataloging agency/community guidance has always been necessary for cataloging codes, to set forth policies on options, to provide further explanations, to include examples specific to a given community, etc. With this new official version, communities now have more opportunities to set their own expectations for how RDA will be used, through the use of application profiles, policy statements, community vocabularies, and other local documentation. These can be as complex or as simple as the communities wish.

Community preparations are actively underway; this includes the creation of application profiles and policy statements as well as training and orientation materials. For example, the Program for Cooperative Cataloging recently announced an implementation plan and timetable, and the MARC/RDA Working Group continues to develop discussion papers and proposals to support compatibility with new RDA elements.

Implementation planning and timetables are under the control of the communities.

RSC regional representatives may be able to provide further information about implementation efforts in their communities.

For those communities unencumbered by the weight of the past, this new version of RDA may be implemented upon the switchover.

The end of the 3R Project

The new official version of the RDA standard also marks the formal end of the 3R Project.

The 3R Project was announced in October 2016. The content in the original Toolkit was frozen in April 2017; no changes to that text have been made since that date. The beta site was released in June 2018 and has been under continuous improvement. The RDA text in the beta site was declared stable in April 2019, which enabled translation and policy statement writing to begin.

The goals of the 3R Project included:

Toolkit Functionality:
- Rebuild the technical infrastructure and data repositories to bring them in line with current best practices
- Adopt responsive design
- Comply with established accessibility standards
- Improve navigation, display, and other features to create a user experience that is more intrinsically "of the web"
- Improve the reporting of revisions and changes
- Improve Toolkit content integration to bring together community, local, and personal documentation
- Implement personalization to allow users to set preferences
- Improve the infrastructure to support RDA translations.

RDA Content:
- Edit RDA to bring it into alignment with the IFLA Library Reference Model (IFLA LRM)
- Reorganize the structure of RDA to make sense with the IFLA LRM and with linked data practices
- Integrate Toolkit displays and data more fully with the RDA Registry
- Advance internationalization efforts, including removing Western focus, within RDA content.

These goals have been achieved.

While the RSC understands that the wording in the new official version is a bit different to those familiar with its predecessors, RDA has now incorporated the terminology, concepts, and approaches associated with linked data, although it can be used in a number of different implementation scenarios. Unlike AACR2, RDA is not a cataloging manual, and it is no longer exclusively rooted in Anglo-American traditions. Instead, it is an international standard which provides a higher-level framework for aspects of the bibliographic universe. Flexibility in application and in world-wide implementation were key drivers of the 3R Project.

RDA supports linked data through its semantic ontology freely available in the RDA Registry. The RDA entities, elements, and vocabulary encoding schemes are represented there in Resource Description Framework (RDF), the syntax of open linked data and the Semantic Web. Entity and element data are contained in RDF element sets. Vocabulary data are contained in RDF value vocabularies using Simple Knowledge Organization System (SKOS). While the RDA ontology began after the London Data Model Meeting in 2007, well before the 3R Project, it was refined, extended, and more closely tied to RDA Toolkit during the 3R Project, allowing for more efficient data management practices.

Orientation and training

The RSC encourages catalogers and metadata managers to engage with the new official version as soon as possible, in advance of community implementation. While communities will take the lead in training on their practices, there are more general orientation materials available from the RSC now:

- Orientation videos on the RSC's YouTube channel
- RDA Lab series (which will be offered again in 2021)
- Recent presentations available on the RSC website
- The updated edition of Chris Oliver's Introducing RDA: A Guide to the Basics after 3R, which will be available in spring 2021.

The road ahead

While the new official RDA text is stable, this does not mean unchanging. RDA is an integrating resource, and as such updates and enhancements to its content are part of the "normal" life of the Toolkit.

The RSC prepares Action Plans on a three-year cycle. The scope of 2021 activities is still being finalized; the 2021-2023 Action Plan will be announced on the RSC website early in 2021. Some of the planned development of RDA content in the coming year will likely be to:

- Continue review and clarification of instructions for performance aggregates
- Continue review of the Resources tab structure and content and implementation of the Community Resources area
- Continue work with policy statement writers on string encoding scheme content
- Continue work on disentangling place and jurisdiction
- Begin work on issues with extent of manifestation, dimensions, and associated elements
- Begin work on reviewing instructions on religious works and expressions in RDA
- Investigate and resolve "pseudo-element" instructions (legal, musical, official communications, and religion legacy instructions)
- Development of a RDA/BIBFRAME map, to supplement the existing MARC 21 and Dublin Core maps
- Support regional groups in this "switchover" year with increased outreach.

Feedback

The RSC welcomes constructive suggestions on RDA content and Toolkit functionality. The Feedback button/form will continue to be available on the new official site.

The RSC affirms its commitment to developing RDA as a responsive and dynamic standard and has resumed a consultative process for considering change proposals to RDA content. "Fast track," discussion paper and proposal processes are open and available and are documented in RSC/Operations/4.

Kathy Glennan, RSC Chair, on behalf of the RDA Steering Committee