



# Developing RDA: a year in the life of JSC

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The Joint Steering Committee for Development of RDA (JSC) is responsible for maintaining and developing the content of RDA: resource description and access. The JSC comprises a Chair and Secretary and a representative of each of the organizations "constituent" to RDA. There are six organizations which were responsible for the Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules which preceded RDA, plus the recent addition of the first major non-Anglophone community to adopt RDA, the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek. The JSC therefore has nine members, two of which represent UK constituencies: CILIP, and the British Library.

The Chair is asked to give the JSC a year's notice if they intend to stand down. The JSC then appoints a Chair-Elect who will take over. Barbara Tillett, Chair at the November 2012 meeting of the JSC, announced that she would retire at the end of 2013, and I was privileged to be nominated Chair-Elect. So I have spent this year learning the craft of chair as well as representing the CILIP constituency.

## **Proposals and discussion papers**

The primary method used by the JSC to develop RDA is the consideration of written proposals to amend RDA content and discussion papers on more general issues. Specific amendments which have no significant impact on RDA users are discussed and approved by the JSC using email and shared workspaces in a "Fast Track" process. Amendments with greater impact are discussed at an annual face-to-face meeting. Although that meeting shapes the overall schedule of activity during the year, there is a constant online interaction between the members of the JSC.

The RDA year starts with the development of new proposals and discussion papers by constituencies, constituency representatives, and external groups. The topics may be prompted by the outcomes of the previous year's activities, or be suggested by the practical application or theoretical examination of RDA.

For example, the JSC assigned several actions to me after discussion of recommendations in a paper on the representation of relationship designators from Appendices I, J, and K of RDA in Resource Description Framework (RDF) which I submitted to the JSC in 2012, as CILIP representative.<sup>1</sup> I created a follow-up discussion paper to carry out those actions.<sup>2</sup> Another example is the British Library's proposal to add an element sub-type for Period of Activity of the Corporate Body which was based on the practical needs of cataloguers of antiquarian resources.<sup>3</sup>

CILIP was asked by JSC to prepare a proposal on accommodating soft mutations in Celtic languages wherever relevant in RDA. This action was a result of a proposal from the American Library Association (ALA) about initial articles in place names.<sup>4</sup> The CILIP constituency response had raised the issue in relation to the names of places in Wales.<sup>5</sup> Subsequent discussion between the National Library of Wales (NLW) and the National

Library of Scotland indicated that the issue did not apply to names based on Scots Gaelic and only applied to some place names based on Welsh, and it was agreed that an example added to RDA would satisfy the NLW. This was suitable for processing as a Fast Track, which I duly initiated as CILIP representative.

However, the implications of bigger proposals and issues need to be discussed by the RDA constituencies, and the JSC sets a date for their submission to allow this to happen; that was 5 August 2013. Submissions must be made via the constituency representative or the JSC Chair. The CILIP constituency did not send anything this year. My discussion paper had large appendices, so these were published separately, resulting in six documents in total. They can be found on the JSC website in the CILIP document series.<sup>6</sup> The British Library submitted five proposals, and they can be found in the BL document series.<sup>7</sup> The JSC received over 45 proposals and discussion papers in 2013.

### **CILIP-BL Committee meeting**

Constituencies are required to send responses to proposals and papers submitted to JSC to provide a basis for discussion at the JSC's annual meeting. The deadline for responses this year was 5 October 2013, to give the JSC representatives an opportunity to assess the responses and prepare updated proposals. The JSC Chair and Secretary use this time to allocate time for discussion in the agenda.

The UK constituencies discuss their responses in a joint CILIP-BL Committee on RDA, which synchronizes its annual meeting to the JSC responses deadline. Secretarial support for the Committee is provided by the BL. Accordingly the Committee met on 28 August 2013 at the British Library, St Pancras, in London. This was the 19th meeting of the CILIP-BL Committee; like the JSC, it has met at more than once per year in the past.

CILIP members of the Committee use the time between the publication of the documents on the JSC website and the meeting, in this case just over three weeks, to enter preliminary responses into a shared workspace provided by the University of Cambridge. BL members can see these during the meeting, and CILIP members are given access to BL comments, via a computer projected display.

CILIP and BL members do not always agree on responses. For example, two options were given in an ALA proposal on colour content.<sup>8</sup> BL members preferred option 1<sup>9</sup>; CILIP members chose option 2.<sup>10</sup> This is clear evidence that the UK benefits from having both constituencies on the JSC.

The Committee Secretary prepares the responses for each constituency when there is straightforward agreement with the proposal or recommendations; otherwise, this is another of the duties of the constituency representative, who is also responsible for submitting the responses to the JSC. In 2013, CILIP had straightforward agreement to 13 documents and made 40 responses in total.

## JSC meeting

The JSC held its annual meeting at a branch of the ALA in Washington, D.C., USA, on 4-8 November 2013. As well as the proposals, papers, and responses, the JSC also discusses Fast Track entries which require clarification or further amendment before being acceptable. This is what happened to the CILIP soft mutation example. The JSC Examples Group suggested that it be placed at RDA 16.2.3.7 Alternative Linguistic Form of Name, and that it conform to recent changes in RDA. I readily agreed as CILIP representative, and the example will appear in the February 2014 release of the RDA Toolkit.

There was general agreement by the JSC members to the recommendations in my discussion paper on relationship designators. I am now working with colleagues who provide services for the RDF namespaces for RDA to update the designators, but it is likely to take several months to complete all the actions resulting from the paper. The JSC failed to reach agreement on the ALA proposal about colour content, and it was withdrawn. The JSC noted the discussion by CILIP in its response, and has suggested that CILIP prepare a new proposal for 2014.

Detail of the outcomes of the 2013 JSC meeting will be published in due course. Meanwhile, some information can be found on the blog of a former ALA representative.<sup>11</sup> Recurring themes raised during the meeting included the internationalization of RDA, RDA's treatment of relationships between FRBR and FRAD entities, and the automated processing of RDA catalogue data. These exemplify the JSC's intentions to ensure that RDA is "designed for the digital world".<sup>12</sup> The world implies international application and the ability to represent relationships between resources described in large aggregations of metadata, and digital implies manipulation of data by computer.

The remaining part of the year following the annual meeting is spent carrying out immediate follow-up actions. These include rewriting proposals to bring them in line with the JSC's decisions, entering and approving the last Fast Track amendments of the year, clearing up other loose ends, and preparing the ground for the New Year, when thoughts turn to developing proposals and discussion papers ... and chairing all this activity!

Next year, the JSC intends to add three new working groups to look at specific aspects of RDA. There are two working groups already covering examples and the treatment of music resources. The new groups will assist the JSC with the development of technical aspects such as models and elements, the RDA/ONIX Framework for Resource Categorization on which the RDA carrier, content, and media types are based, and the treatment of places. If you think you can contribute to these topics and want to get involved, watch out for further announcements from the JSC and the working groups.

All proposal and discussion documents and responses are freely available on the JSC website, along with many other resources giving information about the history of RDA.<sup>13</sup> The CILIP-BL Committee also has a website which gives details of the committee and its

work.<sup>14</sup> It includes a collection of open training materials for RDA.<sup>15</sup> Finally, CILIP members can use the lis-ukbibs email list for discussion of RDA issues.<sup>16</sup>

## References

<sup>1</sup> 6JSC/CILIP Rep/2 RDF representation of RDA relationship designators: discussion paper. Available at: <http://www.rda-jsc.org/docs/6JSC-CILIP-rep-2.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> 6JSC/CILIP Rep/3 RDF representation of RDA relationship designators: a follow-up discussion paper. Available at: <http://www.rda-jsc.org/docs/6JSC-CILIP-rep-3.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> 6JSC/BL/11 Revision of RDA 11.4 and 11.13 and Glossary. Available at: <http://www.rda-jsc.org/docs/6JSC-BL-11.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> 6JSC/ALA/9 Initial Articles in Place Names (RDA 16.2.2.3). Available at: <http://www.rda-jsc.org/docs/6JSC-ALA-9.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> 6JSC/ALA/9/CILIP response. Available at: <http://www.rda-jsc.org/docs/6JSC-ALA-9-CILIP-response.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> CILIP Document Series. Available at: <http://www.rda-jsc.org/working2.html#cilip>

<sup>7</sup> BL Document Series. Available at: <http://www.rda-jsc.org/working2.html#bl>

<sup>8</sup> 6JSC/ALA/26 Colour Content (RDA 7.17). Available at: <http://www.rda-jsc.org/docs/6JSC-ALA-26.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> 6JSC/ALA/26/BL response. Available at: <http://www.rda-jsc.org/docs/6JSC-ALA-26-BL-response.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> 6JSC/ALA/26/CILIP response. Available at: <http://www.rda-jsc.org/docs/6JSC-ALA-26-CILIP-response.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> Resource Description and Access: ALA Rep notes. Available at: [http://www.personal.psu.edu/jxa16/blogs/resource\\_description\\_and\\_access\\_ala\\_rep\\_note\\_s/](http://www.personal.psu.edu/jxa16/blogs/resource_description_and_access_ala_rep_note_s/)

<sup>12</sup> RDA — Resource Description and Access: A Prospectus. Available at: <http://www.rda-jsc.org/docs/5rda-prospectusrev7.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> Joint Steering Committee for Development of RDA. Available at: <http://www.rda-jsc.org/>

<sup>14</sup> CILIP-BL Committee on RDA. Available at: <http://www.slainte.org.uk/aacr/>

<sup>15</sup> RDA training resources. Available at: <http://www.slainte.org.uk/aacr/training.htm>

<sup>16</sup> LIS-UKBIBS Home Page. Available at: <http://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/lists/lis-ukbibs.html>