

bibliotek-o and RDA

Balancing Current Practice with Long Term Goals

The [bibliotek-o framework](#) is built largely on [BIBFRAME 2.0](#) (BF). Neither BF nor bibliotek-o is a “pure” implementation of RDA; RDA/RDF was created to serve that purpose, but has not so far found wide adoption. This paper describes the approach bibliotek-o takes to implementing RDA as a content standard and the reasoning behind that approach.

Like BF, bibliotek-o recognizes [Resource Description & Access](#)’ (RDA) prominent position in the bibliographic cataloging landscape and attempts to strike a balance between current cataloging rules outlined in RDA and flexibility in our practices to create and consume linked data according to practices established on the greater semantic web. To ensure a smooth transition to linked data, we need to show sensitivity to our cataloging colleagues, who have invested heavily in RDA training; ultimately, there will be a transition. This evolution is not beyond the ability or experience of catalogers; large portions of library cataloging practice is already outside the bounds of strict RDA, especially if we consider our non-MARC workflows.

Although RDA has been widely adopted in the MARC community, the constraints of the MARC format mean that current RDA implementations are incomplete in their scope and highly colored by legacy practices. At the same time, RDA itself is based on a model that would arguably benefit from reevaluation in the light of semantic web best practices. Both as an ontology and as a community enterprise, bibliotek-o seeks as one of its primary research objectives to help demonstrate a pathway for the transition to a semantic web approach to library metadata.

In order to illustrate bibliotek-o is not a complete departure from current RDA practices, examples of bibliotek-o adherence to RDA are provided below. Examples of how BF itself deviates from RDA are also provided to show that if an institution were to simply adopt BF “as-is” they would be accepting a certain amount of divergence from RDA.

Select Examples of bibliotek-o Adherence to RDA and Close Parallels

bibliotek-o takes advantage of the RDA’s modeling of relationships between bibliographic resources (in this case bf:Works, bf:Instances, and bf:Items) through the direct reuse of many of the RDA Unconstrained (RDAu) properties. Not only does this allow catalogers to recognize RDA relationships and apply rules they know well, the RDA modeling of these properties is well

thought out, e.g. we can take advantage of useful property hierarchies such as “is translated as (P60280)” is a sub-property of “is derivative (P60250)”.

For the full bibliotek-o Relations recommendation, see:

https://wiki.duraspace.org/display/LD4P/bibliotek-o?preview=/79795231/83237330/bibliotek-o_p+atern_relations_201612.pdf

bibliotek-o Activity subclasses are based closely on MARC relators, while the LoC BF implementation used MARC relators directly off their Contribution and Provision classes. Both the MARC relators and bibliotek-o Activity subclasses align closely with [RDA Agent relationships](#), allowing catalogers to recognize the roles (laid out in RDA) that agents play in the life of bibliographic resources. The bibliotek-o pattern differs in that it also aligns more closely with established activity design patterns, such as the [Schema.org Action](#) class and the [CIDOC CRM Activity class](#).

For the full bibliotek-o Activities recommendation document, see:

https://wiki.duraspace.org/display/LD4P/bibliotek-o?preview=/79795231/83237322/bibliotek-o_p+atern_activities_201612.pdf

The concepts of Content, Carrier, and Media are very important for describing types of bibliographic resources in RDA. While the bibliotek-o framework does not directly reuse Content, Carrier, and Media [value types from RDA/RDF](#), the bf:Work and bf:Instance subclasses defined in the bibliotek-o ontology are based closely on the terms minted by RDA, thereby supporting RDA as a content standard through a single pattern and adhering to the central practice in RDF of classifying types of things through rdf:type and class/subclass definitions.

For full Content/Carrier/Media Type recommendation, see:

https://wiki.duraspace.org/display/LD4P/bibliotek-o?preview=/79795231/83237325/bibliotek-o_p+atern_content_carrier_media_201612.pdf

BIBFRAME and RDA

bibliotek-o takes advantage of some of the ways BF supports RDA principles. That said, BF itself also diverges from RDA in specific ways, including, but not limited to:

- The heavy focus on Authorized Access Points in RDA is unnecessary and not provisioned for in the BF or other LOD models.
- There is no mention of RDA and FRBR LRM’s concept of Nomen (names of a things treated as entities themselves) in BF or bibliotek-o.
- Some BF relations between bf:Works, bf:Instances, and bf:Items are more permissive than RDA rules for relating Works, Expressions, Manifestations, and Items, e.g.

bf:derivativeOf can be used on bf:Works and bf:Instances, but the derivative relationships in RDA are defined only for uses relating Works and Expressions.

- BF grandfathers in some properties that originated in MARC and can be difficult to apply outside that historical context. An example is bf:originalVersion, for which there is no obvious RDA equivalent. RDA appears to have recast this relationship in terms of freshly minted properties such as "is remade as" and "is remake of".
- BF has the class bf:Event, but the Events chapter in RDA has not been written yet. Meetings in both BIBFRAME and RDA are considered Agents rather than events because this is how Events are traditionally conceived in MARC cataloging; however, in most models, meetings would be considered a type of event. One of the major findings of LD4 has been that if library data are to align with data in the outside world then library practice should be reconsidered in areas such as these.
- RDA does not have the concepts of Contributions or Provisions, which are central to BF's model for connecting bibliographic resources to agents.
- Library of Congress's BF implementation diverges from RDA by using MARC relators, and MARC content, carrier, and media vocabularies that parallel, but do not always correspond one-to-one with RDA terms.

Please note: the above list of differences between BF and RDA is not to suggest that the bibliotek-o framework disagrees with BF's direction away from RDA, but rather to point out that there is often a distance between data models and the content standards employed in practice.

Going Forward

When data models like BF and bibliotek-o are used in our descriptive practices we can look for ways to apply select RDA content standards without strictly adhering to the RDA model. For example, efforts have been made to develop RDA application profiles for use in BF editors such that these tools are configured to display RDA labels and provide links to RDA rules while using BF as the underlying data model.

As we inevitably integrate RDA and non-RDA data together in our datasets, alongside very real limitations in our total cataloging workforce, libraries have to ask what from RDA's very prescriptive set of rules should remain, and what libraries can do without and still have rich descriptions that meet our collection management and users' needs. For instance, how important is it to have rules on how to capitalize Meeting names? Or, is it true in all cases, as RDA 6.2.2.8 states, "Do not record an alternative title as part of a preferred title for a work."? Would we really reject (or spend resources cleaning) data that doesn't abide by these rules? How well are we serving library users if we continue to focus exclusively on RDA in training our original catalogers?

Ideally, the RSC would agree that RDA should become a more flexible, lower-barrier set of practices, and provide the community transparent processes for providing feedback to these

ends. It is not enough for library initiatives to ignore or criticize RDA locally; the community needs to officially engage with related standards bodies to communicate our evolving descriptive goals and hope this feedback helps steer future directions of this important international standard.