Alignment between special materials and RDA in the German-speaking countries

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Abstract: Austria, Germany and German-speaking Switzerland are about to implement RDA for data cataloguing. The transition has been prepared in an extensive cooperative project in the three countries over the past three years. The experts have already started to consider the cataloguing of special materials such as rare books and have joined together to create new working groups. These already extend beyond the circle of libraries; representatives of other cultural institutions are also taking part. Existing cataloguing codes and standards in the archive and museum fields will be aligned with RDA for the first time. Currently, RDA contains no or not enough rules for the cataloguing of special materials such as rare books and manuscripts; however these are being introduced in the international review process.

Representatives from literary archives and libraries have joined forces to form a working group. The aim of the working group is to align the "Regeln zur Erschließung von Nachlässen und Autographen" (RNA, Cataloguing rules for literary estates and autographs) used in the German-speaking world with RDA.

The paper describes how the RDA project is organised in the German speaking countries. It reports on the working groups concerned with the cataloguing of special materials. It also provides an insight into how the cooperation with galleries, archives and museums is organised with respect to RDA.

Summary

In this paper we provide a short overview of the structure of the RDA implementation project in the German-speaking countries; the first steps we have taken concerning special materials and cooperation in the cultural sector; we will point out some topics concerning special materials and how to deal with them; and we will give you an example of an existing working group for Literary Archives.

The Implementation Process

The entire implementation process in the German-speaking countries is a cooperative process of 16 partners in Austria, Germany and German-speaking Switzerland. For this region we have a well proven system of collaboration. The Committee for Library Standards is a consortium of national libraries, large academic libraries, regional networks and public and special libraries. The Committee for Library Standards is a coordinating body and contributes a professional opinion in decision-making processes. Its aim is to ensure the use of uniform standards for cataloguing, formats and interfaces of regional networks.
Groups of experts support special tasks by advising, discussing and passing resolutions. The Committee for Library Standards has the following expert groups:

- Expert group for Authority data
- Expert group for Data Formats
- Expert group for Descriptive cataloguing
- Expert group for Subject cataloguing

The expert groups are generally made up of delegates from the institutions represented in the Committee for Library Standards.

A RDA Working Group was established to prepare the introduction/implementation of RDA. The implementation of RDA is a cooperative project, with the project lead and management of the German National Library. Additionally, the national libraries of the three countries have built up a separate working group for the special requirements of national libraries. There is no similar organizational structure for archives and museums in the German-speaking countries.

The main responsibility for the RDA project is the Committee for Library Standards. The entire cataloguing policy for the implementation of RDA in the German-speaking countries has been worked out by the RDA Working Group. If required, the RDA working group sets up working groups for specific topics, like cartographic resources, old and rare books, and music resources. At the moment only librarians are members of these committees or working groups.

The Alignment between special materials and RDA in the German-speaking countries has just started. To continue this work we have to establish, together with other cultural institutions, a modified project organization. There have to be members from other cultural institutions, such as archives, museums or publishers.

For special materials this process started in 2014 with a Joint Working Group between libraries and literary archives. This year the Working Group for old books has been established. We are also planning alignment between the cataloguing guidelines for manuscripts and graphic and other visual material.

**What are the topics concerning rare or special materials and RDA?**

We now turn our attention to rare or special materials and RDA. What does the integration of other communities in the organizational environment of RDA mean? Talking with metadata specialists from other cultural organizations, such as archives, we often notice that our colleagues think that librarians want to take over archival standards. They think RDA claims the lead in the metadata world. That's why we had several discussion sessions to clarify the question, do the literary archives want to collaborate with libraries?
Working groups for special cataloguing have to be a bridge across the communities on every level, a bridge which joins the literary archives standards with RDA and vice versa. The Working group acts on behalf of the RDA Committees and the Committees of the literary archives. Powerful arguments for continuing to develop cooperation in the cultural sector are i) more cost-effective and efficient production of metadata, and ii) benefits for the users.

RDA contains many rules on more than 1,000 pages. However, RDA currently contains no or not enough precise rules for the cataloguing of special materials, such as the personal papers of authors, or prints and drawings. Even if RDA wants to be a cataloguing standard for every kind of resource, reading the rules we can feel RDA's origin: cataloguing rules made for libraries in an Anglo-American context, and for libraries who mainly catalogue published books and published serials with these rules.

Cooperation in the cultural sector

In the German speaking countries authority data and authority control are important. The classical three tasks of an authority file are:

1. To bring together what belongs together;
2. To separate what does not belong together, and;
3. To identify the entity described in the authority record.

Experts from non-library communities, for example archivists, art historians, or producers of research metadata, want to reuse the data recorded in our authority files, but they are not keen to adopt our rules, and are not very interested in implementing RDA in their databases. Most especially, they want to reuse the identifiers of our authority records. These identifiers make it possible to link over different databases, and the use of the identifiers for the authority records makes it possible to link a library catalogue with a database of a literary archive, or with Wikipedia, or a catalogue of drawings, etc.

**Artist:** Johann Ludwig Bleuler, Authority ID (GND) 11851170X (http://d-nb.info/gnd/11851170X)

**Place:** Rheinfall (Rhine Falls), Authority ID (GND)4076698-6 (http://d-nb.info/gnd/4076698-6)
Cataloguing cooperation in the cultural sector is the savior of the hour. The users of our collections and metadata need consistent data. We are happy that the RDA Committee of Principals announced in 2014 that they want to “expand the use of RDA by the wider cultural sector” and the Committee wants to “reflect different communities in line with the strategic plan”.

Cooperation in the cultural sector means working together for a common benefit, and the common benefit could be cost-effective production of metadata. Cooperation also means acting together for the benefit of our users. The users who do not understand why different actors in the cultural sector use different standards for recording names, the users who do not understand why libraries still produce metadata in closed silos.

We are also happy that the Committee of Principals has recognized the need for cooperation. The Committee wants to open RDA to other communities, to make possible the harmonization of the existing different standards. We have to operate in two fields: one is the integration of other standards and the other is rebuilding the organizational structure.

**Integration of other standards in RDA**

We started with a view of the Rhine Falls. We now continue with the Fall of the River Aare at its upper course in the Alps. It is a print by Jakob Samuel Weibel, early 19th century. As a cataloguer, what do you see?

![Three pictures](Pictures: Jakob Samuel Weibel, Chute de l'Aar à la Handeck vallée d'Oberhasli. 1823. Swiss National Library)

Three pictures, of course.

- On the left: in colour, with a printed caption. This printed text could be used as a title in a cataloguing record.

- In the middle: in colour, but is it still the same work? Pay attention to the tree on the right. And no printed text, only text written by an unknown hand.

- On the right: no colours, but the same printed caption as in the picture on the left.
Is this one work, three expressions? Three works? The RDA toolkit does not provide the answer. We know some of you will have an answer to my question. A cataloguer in a prints and drawings collection deals with this question daily. But it is difficult to express the answer in a general, universal rule.

This image of the waterfall is a print, we find this print in several collections. There are many copies. But nearly every copy of this print has unique characteristics. If we formulate a detailed general rule we are sure we will have many, many situations where the rule will not be applicable. Among us, there are several experts for prints and drawings – we try to formulate a general cataloguing guideline! We are sure there will be many good answers to the question.

Now what do you see? A work of art? A portrait of William Tell? Or a postage stamp? The description of this resource will not be the same in the William-Tell-Museum or in Prints and Drawings Department of a library or in a philatelic collection or in collections of letters.

Now we see two postage stamps, the colour and the denomination of the stamp have changed. And to make it more difficult, there is a wartime overprint by the Swiss post on the stamp at the right.
Now we see a tête-bêche with a postmark from a postage stamp block. Is it a new work? And what about the postmark? Do we need the postmark for the dating of a letter? Or are we collecting postmarks?

And it doesn't end. We could show you William Tell on postage stamps all day …

RDA does not have a solution for every cataloguing challenge for every resource. There are not enough rules for cataloguing personal papers of authors, prints, postage marks or typewriters.

But there is no need to integrate all of the special rules in the RDA toolkit. We should continue to use other standards than RDA to describe our collections.
Special Material Working Groups in the German speaking area – the Literary Archives Working Group

We mentioned the Workings Groups for special materials in the German speaking area. We both are members of the Working Group “Literary Estates and Autographs Rules RNA”. The goal of this group is not to bring these German rules into the Toolkit. The RNA is optimized for the need of literary archives in the German language context. Using these rules the Literary Archives describe the estates and the personal papers of authors. The Literary Estates and Autographs Rules" ("Regeln zur Erschließung von Nachlässen und Autographen", RNA) consist of 84 pages, the core of the rules consists of only 20 pages.

Our goal is that the guidelines of the literary archives should be interoperable with RDA. This means that we must develop the descriptive part of the instructions; we want to avoid any contradiction to RDA. The access points are constructed according to RDA guidelines and according to the rules of the Integrated Authority File GND.

We think this is the most important part of the work. For us, it is important that access points are controlled by the same authority file; access points with identifiers will provide easier access to our collections.

Here is the organisational structure of this working group for Literary Archives. It consists of:

- A team of experts from archives, museums and libraries;
- An editorial team which works out the papers for the commentary phase of the experts;
- An organisation team;
- Special guests for punctual support, when needed.

Conclusion

To conclude on the requirements for further work with rare and special materials. There is no need for full integration with special rules. On the contrary, a full integration of all special rules would inflate the RDA Toolkit. So a better solution is to cross-reference between the RDA Toolkit and the guidelines and rules of other communities to cover the needs of cataloguers.

To achieve this objective we will have to build up an organisational structure for all cultural institutions that guarantees that rules are interoperable. So the Joint Working Group of Libraries and Literary Archives can be viewed as a sort of a pilot project. This group is responsible for ensuring that the Rules for Estates and Autographs remain compatible with RDA rules. The foundation for developing acceptance of other standards is that the RDA Committee is open to the needs of the special communities.

The minimum requirement for all activities in the field of describing materials from all cultural institutions is the alignment of standards to build up a linking point for a global data exchange which makes our materials visible and usable. The standardisation of metadata gives us the opportunity to work with our metadata much more efficiently. In a type of data value chain, we will be able to provide much wider services than we can at the moment. The interaction of metadata coming from different communities, which are unable to work together at the moment, will represent a dramatic increase for science and technology. Europeana is an example of such an approach, but the lack of consistent, standardised, high-quality metadata shows very well the difficulties faced by such a project.

How this should be done, and what problems we will have to solve for this approach to be successful will be a subject of a future presentation.
The speakers

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