

EURIG seminar, May 23th 2016

Report on the French position regarding the RDA implementation

The French position on RDA

In November 2014, the National Library of France (Bibliothèque nationale de France, BnF) and the Bibliographic Agency for Higher Education (Agence bibliographique de l'enseignement supérieur, ABES) – the two national bibliographic agencies respectively mandated to cover the metadata standardization needs and policies of both public and research libraries – jointly expressed the French position on RDA, defining the pivotal points of the Bibliographic Transition Program.

The French roadmap reads as follows:

- 1 - FRBRising French catalogs using automatic data processing as well as the technologies and standards of the semantic web.
- 2 - Deriving new cataloguing rules from RDA in RDA-FR: *A French Transposition of RDA*, which might prefigure a French application profile of RDA. These new rules are being gradually implemented since 2015.
- 3- Launching a national Bibliographic Transition Program, which aims at supporting all stakeholders in France through the drastic changes induced by such a major normative and technological evolution. The national Bibliographic Transition Program has a new Website: <http://www.transition-bibliographique.fr/enjeux/bibliographic-transition-in-france/>

French professionals agree that although RDA is FRBR-based, the model cannot be fully implemented by a code which to date does not take full advantage of the links between the two kinds of records upon which it reposes – bibliographic and authority. Whether from a strategic or bibliographic point of view, **adopting RDA as is could therefore not be considered as a progress in the national context, where the wealth and maintenance of those very links constitute the core and strength of all major French library catalogues.**

Rather than rushing through the adoption of a code still unsuited to the national context, **France focuses on producing FRBR-compliant catalogs and demonstrating their serviceability.** The aim is to show the benefits of information thus structured, before impulsing a more dramatic turn on the descriptive rules and practices for current cataloguing.

With this in prospect and building upon the heritage data in its catalogue, the BnF uses the algorithms developed for data.bnf.fr – its Linked Open Data service – to automatically generate links between a work and its editions. In turn, those links power the catalogue, and lay the foundation stone of a truly FRBRised architecture.

However, **France ultimately aims to adopt a national RDA profile matching its bibliographic ambition.**

A working group called “Standardization – RDA in France” (Groupe “Normalisation – RDA en France”) is currently drafting the new French cataloguing code, *RDA-FR: A French Transposition of RDA*. The

rules will be gradually published and applied over years, eventually replacing the French cataloguing rules published by AFNOR, the French standardization body.

RDA-FR: A French Transposition of RDA refers to RDA while preserving the French bibliographic analysis as well as the advanced features of French library catalogs. It conforms to the international rules whenever possible, but bends them to the French context whenever necessary. It is based on the French translation of RDA, while arranging for additions, exceptions or adaptations to French-specific cases. All the changes are documented and the reference to the RDA rules is always mentioned. It can therefore be seen as the prefiguration of a future French application profile of RDA.

Most of the disagreements between the French analysis and the current RDA rules are about the definition of the Expression entity, especially in the case of aggregates and augmentations. The French analysis considers that the content of a Manifestation ought to be described at the Manifestation level. If a given Manifestation is an aggregate of several contents, as is often the case, we have to describe the whole content at the Manifestation level, so as to make a distinction for the form of each Expression contained within the Manifestation. In such cases of major disagreement with the RDA analysis, the French code RDA-FR doesn't follow the organization of RDA but adapts it to the French analysis. For example, the element Content type was removed from RDA Chapter 6 and included in an extended Chapter 3 re-entitled "Describing carriers and contents", keeping the same vocabulary as RDA.

Elements published and elements to come

The first new cataloguing rules of *RDA-FR: a French Transposition of RDA* were published in 2015.

They are related to RDA Section 1 and pertain to the description of Manifestations. Here is what has been published so far: general rules on transcription, basis for identification of the resource, sources of information, the elements Media type and Content type corresponding to ISBD Area 0, and the Publication statement.

In 2016 we plan to publish a more important set of rules:

- **In Section 1**, elements completing the Publication statement (Production statement, Distribution statement, Manufacture statement and Copyright date), and elements concerning the physical description (Carrier type, Extent) and characteristics of electronic publications (Digital File Characteristics, Equipment or System Requirement).
- **In Section 2**, general guidelines on recording attributes of works and expressions. These guidelines are not limited to RDA Chapter 5, but cover all three chapters of RDA Section 2, including the construction of access points to represent works and expressions, for all kinds of resources. They will be completed by chapters focusing on each particular type of resource (music, graphic, etc.). In this section, the organization of the rules of RDA-FR differs from RDA.
- **In Section 3**, Chapter 8: General guidelines on recording attributes of persons, families and corporate bodies, Chapter 9: Identifying persons and Chapter 10: Identifying families
- **In Section 5**, Chapter 17: General guidelines on recording primary relationships.

Thus, by the end of the year, the most important rules for FRBRized cataloguing will be available to French libraries, but also ILS vendors. We hope it will give some significant input to the development of new cataloguing systems and tools conceived for FRBRized cataloguing.

Workshops

We have organized 2 “Jane-athons” in France this year, using RIMMF as a cataloguing tool:

The first one, focusing on George Sand’s works and therefore called “Sand-athon”, took place at the BnF on February 2nd 2016. It was an internal BnF workshop reserved to the staff engaged in the revision of the French cataloguing rules.

The second one took place at the BnF on May 4th 2016. It was a national workshop to experience hand-on cataloguing with RIMMF and RDA on Jules Verne’s works and related resources- we called it “Verne-athon”.

A third Jane-athon is scheduled for the end of June. It will be a national trainers’ workshop and will build upon the output of the first Verne-athon.

Developing innovative systems

A first French ILS vendor has released a truly FRBRized ILS called “Syrtis”, which is based on FRBR and Semantic web technologies. It is implemented in a medium-sized public library.

Documentation is available at: <http://www.progilone.fr/syrtis>

Training

From 2012 onwards training sessions have been regularly held in order to present the challenges of the bibliographic transition to the French library community.

Another training campaign was organized last year so as to train cataloguers on new cataloguing rules of the code RDA-FR. This training program will be developed as new rules are published.

The slides of the training sessions are available (in French) on the Website: <http://www.transition-bibliographique.fr/se-former/supports/>. This is also where we plan to publish several practical exercises with answers.