

## THE „TRANSITION BIBLIOGRAPHIQUE” PROGRAM: THE FRENCH RECIPE FOR ADOPTING RDA

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### Introduction

One of the current objectives of the National Széchényi Library is to implement a new nation-wide library platform supporting shared cataloguing. The future project involves the adoption of all relevant standards and serves as an opportunity to introduce new cataloguing rules considered to be comprehensive in the sense of covering all document types, including the ones emerged (and about to emerge) with the development of technology. Today the RDA (Resource Description and Access) seems to have no rivals in the arena, so it is quite obvious to choose it as the basis of the new national standard / guidelines for library cataloguing. When preparing for the project we endeavoured to identify the best practices for implementing an RDA based cataloguing policy. The article provides a deeper look into the Bibliographic Transition Program in France outlining the path which might be followed.

### 1 Identifying best practices

The RDA is a new Anglo-American cataloguing standard replacing the AACR2. Nevertheless, it is anything but new for experts around the library world. Despite its having brought a new approach to cataloguing and representing bibliographic data, a direct path from the ISBDs through the MARC standards to the Linked Data concept can be detected: librarians have always been keen on linking one piece of information to another one, constructing large datasets that are related to each other in as many ways as it is possible. Librarians have always done their

best. Now they have a tool to do it even better. This tool is called the Semantic Web. The Resource Description Framework (RDF) is the “language” of the Semantic Web. The data created using the RDA can be represented in the RDF and information so far hidden in relational databases can be made available for web search engines, which is a great advantage of the RDA over former standards.

Not surprisingly the RDA started to spread in the library world quite rapidly and has been recently adopted by a lot of national bibliographic agencies in Europe and Overseas<sup>1</sup>. One may find that the practices for implementation of the RDA differ in various countries, but all the adoption strategies seem to agree on several things, such as the following:

- introducing the RDA is a long-term process requiring deep consideration and comprehensive preparations;
- adopting the RDA needs to be conducted in a collaborative way by involving experts and stakeholders from different areas;
- involving the authorities responsible for national standardizations is highly recommended, however the RDA is not an ISO standard; elaborating and implementing library cataloguing rules traditionally belong to tasks of national standards authorities.

As we started to consider starting a project of implementing a new nation-wide library platform, it was more than obvious that the project should cover the adoption of relevant standards and serve as an opportunity to introduce new cataloguing rules. Also, it was quite clear that the RDA should be chosen as the basis of the new national standard for library cataloguing in Hungary. Looking through the best practices concerned we found that the French process of implementation was one of the most inspiring ones.

## **2 Which way to go? – the French response (2010-2014)**

Although decision was quite obvious for us, decision making was a long process in France. Actually, two workgroups were established to find the right answer to the question: Which way is better – updating the existing AFNOR<sup>2</sup> standards, or shifting in the direction of the RDA? Finally the latter option was chosen.

A **technical workgroup** of experts was established in the framework of the

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<sup>1</sup> For the implementation processes in Denmark and the German language area see: Cato, Fog and Thorborg 2015 ; Cato and Hansen 2016 ; Aliverti, Behrens and Schaffnerm 2016

<sup>2</sup> AFNOR = Association française de normalisation = French Association of Standardization

AFNOR, the „Information and Documentation” committee. Its responsibility was to find out if the RDA is well-funded and feasible to implement in France. The **strategic workgroup** brought together the representatives of the AFNOR, line ministries, bibliographic agencies, library associations, training organizations. Its task was to decide whether to adopt the RDA in France (based on the results of technical wg.).

The technical workgroup was launched in 2010 and its main tasks were as follows:

- analysing the RDA
- measuring the possibility of implementation
- creating a French Profile in the RDA Toolkit
- contributing to the translation of the RDA
- assessing the impact on the ILSs
- data migration issues
- evaluating the costs to incur
- providing information on the FRBR and the FRAD to the stakeholders
- providing explanation about how implementation of the RDA will change the work of cataloguers
- making recommendations about the schedule of implementation.

As one of the most important results of the workgroup the French translation of the RDA was finished and made available (via subscription) through the RDA Toolkit. France participates in the activities of the RDA Steering Committee, the RSC (formerly: the Joint Steering Committee for the Development of the RDA, the JSC) which is responsible for the development of the RDA. French proposals regarding the RDA are transmitted to the RSC by the means of the European RDA Interest Group (EURIG).

The activities of the above mentioned (technical and strategic) workgroups resulted in the publication of a statement<sup>3</sup> (or recommendation) which can be considered as a positive response to the adoption of the RDA in France. The first element of the roadmap<sup>4</sup> outlined in the document is the FRBRising French

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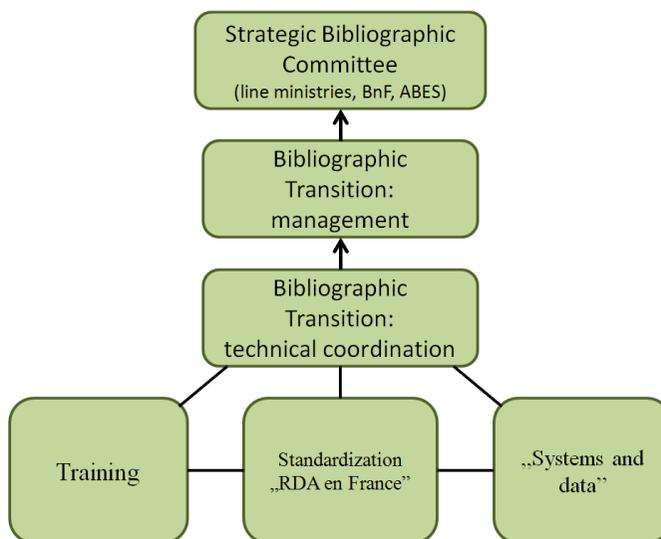
<sup>3</sup> See: De RDA en France à la Transition bibliographique 2014

<sup>4</sup> See: Bibliographic Transition in France 2016

catalogues. So the French decided that just before adopting the new rules they would turn their library catalogues into the FRBR-compliant by organizing the information in a way of disposing of the “old fashioned” document-oriented logic. The first step in this direction was the clustering of all editions pertaining to a work, i.e. to linking a work to all its editions. The National Library of France (Bibliothèque nationale de France, BnF) used its Linked Open Data service (data.bnf.fr) to generate these links. The other elements of the roadmap were deriving new cataloguing rules from the RDA in *RDA-FR: A French Transposition of RDA* and launching a national **Bibliographic Transition Program** aiming at supporting stakeholders through the anticipated drastic changes.

### 3 Organizational background

In 2013, the above mentioned strategic workgroup was replaced by the Strategic Bibliographic Committee (= Comité stratégique bibliographique, CSB) empowered to make strategic decisions about the new models of organizing and sharing library information in a ten-year perspective, taking into account the possibilities of using semantic technology. The activities regarding bibliographic transition are carried out by three workgroups as it can be seen in Figure 1.

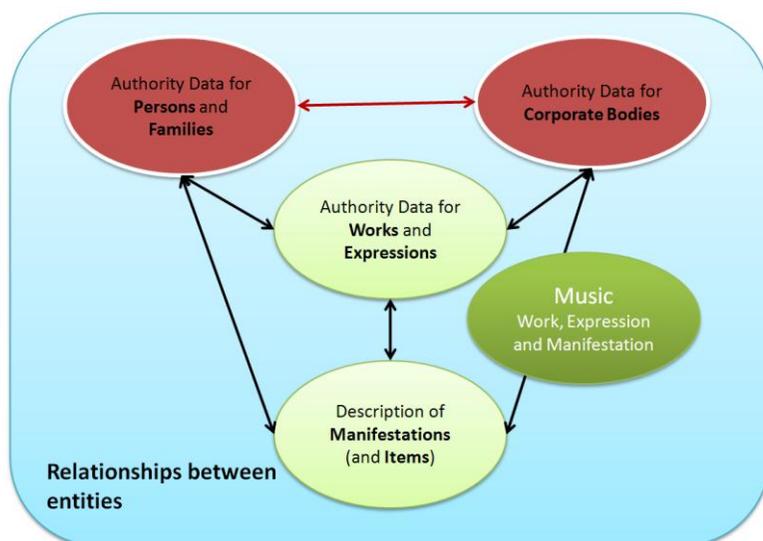


**Fig. 1**

*Organizational background*

The “RDA en France” workgroup is responsible for creating the new national standard based upon the RDA. It also participates in the activities of the RSC and

the EURIG. The wg. Training organizes courses to help the implementation of the RDA. The wg. “Systems and data” provides recommendations for system librarians implementing the new ILSs, it defines the technical consequences of gradual introduction of new standards and provides information for developers about the impacts of new standards on formats and about the FRBR-compliant data sets published by bibliographic agencies. It also promotes data exchange between developers and librarians and is responsible for maintaining the website „transition-bibliographique”<sup>5</sup>. But let us now return to the “RDA en France” workgroup which consists of six sub-workgroups that are named by the relevant FRBR entities. There is also a special sub-group for musical works.



**Fig. 2**

*Wg. “RDA en France”*

Now we are focusing on the activities of the Description of Manifestations (and Items) sub-workgroup. The aim of this sub-workgroup is to unify the ten existing AFNOR standards on bibliographic description in one comprehensive standard covering all document types but old books. The main sources the workgroup bases its work on to achieve the goal outlined are the RDA and the ISBD. The latter one is still considered to be relevant<sup>6</sup>. The structure of the new

<sup>5</sup> See: Transition bibliographique [no date]. Available from: <http://www.transition-bibliographique.fr/>

<sup>6</sup> See: Alignment of the ISBD 2015.

standard is the same as that of the RDA, and the names of elements stem from the French version of the RDA Toolkit.

## 4 Gradual implementation

In March 2015, an agenda was published with a schedule for publishing the elements. It did not follow the “field-to-field” logic laid down in the ISBD, instead, the elements were scheduled to be published according their relevance in identifying a resource. The first element set was published in June 2015. The „transition-bibliographique” website has been available since the summer of 2015, training courses started in September of the same year and the second element set was published in August 2016.

1st Published Element Set	Introduction
<i>1.7 Transcription</i>	–
<i>1.8 Numbers Expressed as Numerals or as Words</i>	–
<i>1.9 Dates</i>	–
<i>2.1 Basis for Identification of the Resource</i>	–
<i>2.2 Sources of Information</i>	–
<i>2.8 Publication Statement</i>	In BnF: December 2014 (for legal deposit materials); in SUDOC: January 2016
<i>3.2 Media Type</i>	BnF: February 2016; in SUDOC: November 2014
<i>3.51 Content Type</i>	BnF: February 2016; in SUDOC: November 2014
<i>4.3 Contact Details</i>	–

**Fig. 3**

*First published element set*

2nd Published Element Set	Introduction
2.7 Production Statement	–
2.9 Distribution Statement	–
2.10 Manufacture Statement	–
2.11 Copyright Date	–
3.3 Carrier Type	–
3.19 Digital File Characteristic	–
3.20 Equipment or System Requirement	–

**Fig. 4**

*Second published element set*

The RDA-FR, the French version of the RDA, is more detailed than the original one in terms of including additional rules, more (French) examples, and comparative tables make the overview of differences between former standards and the RDA-FR easier.

**1.7.6 Citations**

▼ *Correspondance* : pas de correspondance dans **RDA**

**1.7.6.1 Titres composés d'une citation**

**1.7.6.1.1 Titres composés d'une citation d'une expression d'une autre œuvre**

▼ *Correspondance* : pas de correspondance dans **RDA**

Si le titre consiste uniquement en une citation extraite d'une expression d'une autre œuvre ou d'une partie d'une autre œuvre, mettre une majuscule au premier mot ou à l'abréviation du premier mot de cette citation.

Transcrire la ponctuation telle qu'elle apparaît sur la source d'information, y compris l'usage des guillemets.

**EXEMPLES**

« Longtemps, je me suis couché de bonne heure » / Roland Barthes

Citation de l'incipit d'une autre œuvre. L'incipit est mis entre guillemets sur la source d'information.

« Comme un souci aux rayons du soleil » : Ronsard et l'invention d'une poétique de la merveille

Citation du dernier vers du poème CLXXI des Amours de Ronsard. La citation est mise entre guillemets sur la source d'information.

no corresponding chapter in RDA

**Fig. 5**

*RDA-FR: a standard more detailed*

FD Z 44-063			RDA-FR			Écarts entre les deux normes
référence	paragraphe (s'il y a lieu)	intitulé ou thème	référence	paragraphe (s'il y a lieu)	intitulé	
4.2.6.1		Nom de l'éditeur [et/ou du diffuseur/distributeur] – Transcription Abréviation du nom de l'éditeur	2.8.5.3		Enregistrement des noms des éditeurs	modification
4.2.6.2	§ 1	Nom de l'éditeur [et/ou du diffuseur/distributeur] – Transcription Nom de l'éditeur sous la forme d'un sigle	2.8.5.3		Enregistrement des noms des éditeurs	modification
4.2.7.1		Nom de l'éditeur [ou du diffuseur/distributeur] en plusieurs langues Forme retenue	2.8.5.6		Nom de l'éditeur dans plus d'une langue ou d'une écriture	
4.2.7.2		Nom de l'éditeur [ou du diffuseur/distributeur] en plusieurs langues Forme(s) parallèle(s)	2.8.6		Forme parallèle du nom de l'éditeur	
4.2.8.1		Publication ne portant pas de nom d'éditeur [ou de diffuseur/distributeur] Nom de l'imprimeur à la place du nom de l'éditeur				suppression

**Fig. 6**

*A part of a comparative table from RDA-FR*

Cataloguers stand in the frontline of transposition, so their work is being assisted in many ways. The SUDOC is the collective catalogue for academic institutions maintained by the Bibliographic Agency for Higher Education (Agence bibliographique de l'enseignement supérieur, ABES) which developed a website<sup>7</sup> to help cataloguers at using the RDA. It also published comparative tables<sup>8</sup> and guides in the FAQ formats for the same purpose.

<sup>7</sup> See: Abes 1997 – 2017. Available from: <http://documentation.abes.fr/sudoc/index.htm>

<sup>8</sup> See: *Application dans le Dudoc* 2015. Available from: [http://documentation.abes.fr/sudoc/normes/RDA\\_FR\\_application\\_sudoc\\_janvier\\_2016\\_VALIDÉ.pdf](http://documentation.abes.fr/sudoc/normes/RDA_FR_application_sudoc_janvier_2016_VALIDÉ.pdf)

## Nom de l'éditeur

Contexte	Ce que la norme disait avant (Z 44-050)	Ce que la norme dit maintenant (RDA-FR)	Ce que j'applique dans le Sudoc
Où chercher les informations ?	<b>4 - Sources</b> prises dans l'ordre suivant : page de titre ou substitut, parties liminaires, achevé d'imprimer. Autre(s) source(s) : <b>mention entre []</b>	<b>2.2.4 et 2.8.5 - Sources</b> : ordre : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ la même que celle du titre propre</li> <li>▪ 1 autre source dans la ressource</li> <li>▪ 1 source externe : <b>mention entre [] et indiquer en note la source d'information utilisée.</b></li> </ul>	J'applique ce point de RDA-FR tel quel
Le document mentionne plusieurs noms d'éditeurs	<b>4.2.2 - Nombre d'éditeurs</b> : 1 nom ou les 3 premiers, en fonction de la typographie, sinon selon l'ordre de citation. Les omissions sont signalées par [etc.].	<b>2.8.5.5.1 - Nombre d'éditeurs</b> : Si plus d'une personne, famille ou collectivité est mentionnée comme éditeur de la ressource, <b>le premier nom d'éditeur</b> selon l'ordre indiqué par la typographie, la disposition ou la séquence des noms sur la source d'information <b>est obligatoire.</b>	J'applique ce point de RDA-FR de la manière suivante :  Si la publication comporte plusieurs noms d'éditeurs, on les transcrit tous  [les alternatives de la norme envisageant des omissions ne sont donc pas retenues]

Fig. 7

*Part of a comparative table in one of the SUDOC support materials for cataloguers*

As for the FAQs, one of them is titled “Tout ce que vous avez toujours voulu savoir sur l’application de RDA-FR dans le Sudoc (sans jamais oser le demander)” = “Everything you always wanted to know about the application of the RDA-FR in Sudoc (but were afraid to ask)”<sup>9</sup>. As you probably realised the title refers to the famous Woody Allen movie, which proves that the implementation of a library standard does not necessarily demand a lack of sense of humour. Another document<sup>10</sup> providing users with practical instructions related to the use of the RDA includes questions and answers such as the following:

“Questions: Will an overall correction of records be made for the abbreviations [S. l. ] [s.n.] or [s.d.]? Is the ABES going to correct the already existing records in an automated way? [...]

Answer: Correcting [S. l.] [s.n.] ou [s.d.] (and their multiple variants) is worth considering but not a priority. Fields on content and media type (181/182) are to be added to the records via mass correction. Specification is currently in process.

<sup>9</sup> See: Abes 2016. Available from:

[http://documentation.abes.fr/sudoc/normes/FAQ\\_application\\_RDA\\_FR\\_dans\\_sudoc.pdf](http://documentation.abes.fr/sudoc/normes/FAQ_application_RDA_FR_dans_sudoc.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> *Transition bibliographique - Réponses ABES 2015*, 2015. Available from:

[http://documentation.abes.fr/sudoc/normes/RDA\\_FR\\_Questions\\_JeCours\\_VALIDÉ.pdf](http://documentation.abes.fr/sudoc/normes/RDA_FR_Questions_JeCours_VALIDÉ.pdf)

However, corrections of editor names can be made only manually, case by case, in order to check the name form on the resource.”

## 5 Where are we now?

The National Committee for Library Standardisation in Hungary was established at the end of 2015. One of its priorities is to develop and implement the RDA based comprehensive cataloguing standard. We compiled an e-learning object about „understanding the RDA” attempting to answer such questions as “What is the RDA?” “What is its relation to former standards?” “How to adopt it?” The material also involves basic knowledge about the semantic web, the Linked Data, etc.

Translation and implementation of the RDA are tied to other project activities such as the design and development of a new library platform for the national library which is a great opportunity to create a comprehensive system that will meet the requirements of a 21<sup>st</sup> century national library.

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## Summary

### THE „TRANSITION BIBLIOGRAPHIQUE” PROGRAM: THE FRENCH RECIPE FOR ADOPTING RDA

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The key objective of the National Széchényi Library is to implement a new nationwide library platform. The project includes the introduction of new cataloguing rules as well. As the RDA seems to have no rivals in the arena, it is quite obvious to choose it as the basis for the new national standard for library cataloguing. When preparing for the project we identified the French implementation process as one of the best practices to adopt the RDA. In 2014 a statement was published by the National Library of France (BnF) and the Bibliographic Agency for Higher Education (ABES) on fostering the improvement of national library catalogues so that they can be integrated into the Web of Data. As a part of the project a program was launched with the aim to provide support to all stakeholders related to the implementation process. The roadmap of bibliographic transition covers FRBRisation of catalogues and adopting the RDA rules. The article gives a glimpse of the project by outlining the arrangement procedures, the organizational background and steps and contents of gradual implementation of the RDA.