**To:** SAC RDA Subcommittee

**From:** John Attig

**Subject:** Treatment of Subjects in RDA: report and draft proposal

# Summary of JSC Discussions and Decisions

The JSC agreed that it was premature to make decisions about the modeling of subject entities in RDA until we have the results of the FRBR Review Group's consolidation of the FR models. The FR family consolidation project has the goal of creating a single model for functional requirements for bibliographic data, incorporating the current FRBRer, FRAD, and FRSAD models as well as the FRBRoo model  which has just been augmented by FRAD and FRSAD. The methodology involves reviewing the entities and their attributes and relationships to eliminate duplication, resolve differences, and identify and fill gaps. The process effectively commenced in 2009 with a necessary analysis and comparison of the semantics of the elements during the development of the FR namespaces. The current project has been funded by IFLA from 2012, and is due for completion during 2014. External review and approval of the consolidated model is not likely until early 2015. [Information from Gordon Dunsire]

This means that we cannot yet define the entity or entities that are to be the subjects of a work. Although JSC members expressed a general preference for the “lightweight approach” recommended by ALA [BL response], it was deemed premature to act on that preference.

It was agreed, however, that a subject relationship should be defined in RDA, and that a high-level relationship element (cf. **creator** in Chapter 19, **contributor** in Chapter 20, **related work** in Chapter 25) should be added to RDA, using very general language about “the entity that is the subject of the work”. It was felt that Chapter 23 would be the appropriate place in RDA to define this relationship element. ALA was asked to prepare a proposal for consideration at the 2014 JSC meeting.

A first draft of such a proposal is appended to this document, for consideration by the Subcommittee at its meeting at ALA Midwinter 2014.

The following are lists of the specific recommendations in 6JSC/ALA/Discussion/2 and the proposals in 6JSC/Chair/8, annotated to indicate that most of them have been deferred, but that several of them are to be acted on by ALA.

## 6JSC/ALA/Discussion/2 recommendations:

1. General approach to subjects in RDA: The audience for RDA guidelines and instructions related to subjects remains an open issue.
2. Choice of model: Deferred pending the results of the FR consolidation.
3. Terminology: No consensus; decision not required until the issue of subject entities is addressed following the FR consolidation.
4. User tasks: Deferred pending the results of the FR consolidation.
5. Entities: Deferred pending the results of the FR consolidation.
6. The primary Subject relationship: Agreement that the subject relationship exists only between the Work entity and the subject entity. The nature of the subject entity/entities must be deferred pending results of the FR consolidation. However, a high-level relationship element (Subject of the work) should be added to RDA Chapter 23.  
   **Action: ALA**
7. Subject vs. genre/form: This remains an open issue.
8. Subject chapters in RDA: Deferred pending the results of the FR consolidation.
9. Events: Deferred pending results of the FR consolidation and related efforts.
10. Places: There was general interest in pursuing this, and the question was referred to a new JSC Place Names Working Group that is being charged to look at a variety of issues relating to place names.
11. Attributes of the subject entity: Deferred pending the results of the FR consolidation.
12. Access points: This remains an open issue.
13. Relationships: Deferred pending the results of the FR consolidation.

## 6JSC/Chair/8 proposals

1. General proposal 1: Deferred.
2. General proposal 2: No decision was made.
3. Chapter 0 proposal 1: Deferred pending the results of the FR consolidation.
4. Chapter 0 proposal 2: Deferred pending the results of the FR consolidation.
5. Chapter 0 proposal 3: No decision was made.
6. Chapter 0 proposal 4: Deferred.
7. Section 4 proposal: Deferred.
8. Chapter 12 proposal 1: Deferred pending the results of the FR consolidation.
9. Chapter 13 proposal: Deferred pending the results of the FR consolidation.
10. Chapter 14 proposal: Deferred pending the results of the FR consolidation.
11. Chapter 15 proposal: Deferred pending the results of the FR consolidation.
12. Chapter 16 proposal 1: Deferred; referred to JSC Place Names Working Group.
13. Chapter 16 proposal 2: Deferred; referred to JSC Place Names Working Group.
14. Chapter 16 proposal 3: Deferred; referred to JSC Place Names Working Group.
15. Chapter 16 proposal 4: Deferred; referred to JSC Place Names Working Group.
16. Chapter 16 proposal 5: Deferred; referred to JSC Place Names Working Group.
17. Chapter 16 proposal 6: Deferred; referred to JSC Place Names Working Group.
18. Chapter 16 proposal 7: Deferred; referred to JSC Place Names Working Group.
19. Chapter 17 proposal: Deferred.
20. Chapter 18 proposal: Deferred.
21. Chapter 19 proposal 1: Deferred.
22. Chapter 19 proposal 2: Deferred.
23. Chapter 19 proposal 3: Deferred.
24. Chapter 19 proposal 4: Deferred.
25. Section 7 proposal: **Action: ALA**
26. Chapter 23 proposal: Develop proposal for adding a high-level relationship element, along with supporting guidelines. **Action: ALA**
27. Chapter 33 proposal: Deferred pending the results of the FR consolidation.
28. Chapter 34 proposal: Deferred pending the results of the FR consolidation.
29. Chapter 35 proposal: Deferred pending the results of the FR consolidation.
30. Chapter 36 proposal: Deferred pending the results of the FR consolidation.
31. Chapter 37 proposal: Deferred pending the results of the FR consolidation.
32. Appendix L: Deferred pending the results of the FR consolidation.
33. Glossary proposal: Generally deferred, although some definitions may be needed for terms and elements added to Chapter 23.

# Proposals

The following proposals are based on the text provided by Barbara Tillett in 6JSC/Chair/8 [with heartfelt gratitude for providing such a good beginning for this exercise], but are limited to those proposals related to the definition of a subject relationship element in Chapter 23.

## 1. RDA 0.6.7: Revise text of footnote

0.6.7 Section 7: Recording Subject Relationships

When recording relationships between a work and an entity that is the subject of that work, include as a minimum at least one subject relationship element that are applicable and readily ascertainable.23

23 When using an access point to represent the ~~subject~~ entity that is the subject of a work, the access point can be constructed by using either the preferred name, title, or term for the entity, or a classification number representing the entity. Construct the access point representing the ~~subject~~ entity that is the subject of a work following the standards for subject access points and classification numbers used by the agency creating the data.

* ***JCA comment:*** I believe that these changes are consistent with the terminology proposed for use in Chapter 23, and therefore should be made.

## 2. RDA 18.0: Add a reference to Chapter 23

18.0 Scope

This chapter provides background information to support the application of guidelines and instructions in chapters 19–22 on recording relationships to persons, families, and corporate bodies associated with a resource. It includes:

1. an explanation of key terms (see 18.1)
2. the functional objectives and principles underlying the guidelines and instructions in chapters 19–22 (see 18.2)
3. the core elements for recording relationships to persons, families, and corporate bodies (see 18.3)
4. the use of identifiers and authorized access points to record those relationships (see 18.4)
5. the use of relationship designators to indicate the specific function performed by the person, family, or corporate body in relation to the resource (see 18.5)
6. the use of notes to provide additional information about relationships (see 18.6).

For persons, families, and corporate bodies that are the subject of works, see chapter 23.

* ***JCA comment:*** I’m not sure that this reference is necessary. If it is retained, similar statements relating to Work and Expression may need to be added in Chapters 5 and 6 of RDA.

## 3. RDA 19.0: Add reference to Chapter 23

19.0 Purpose and Scope

This chapter provides general guidelines and instructions on recording relationships to persons, families, and corporate bodies associated with a work (i.e., creators and others).

For persons, families, and corporate bodies that are the subject of a work (subject relationship), see chapter 23.

* ***JCA comment:*** I’m not sure that this reference is necessary.

## 4. RDA Section 7: Change title of the section

Section 7

RECORDING SUBJECT RELATIONSHIPS ~~TO CONCEPTS, OBJECTS, EVENTS, & PLACES~~

## 5. RDA Chapter 23: Replace current content. Note: All content is new; no mark-up is shown.

23

GENERAL GUIDELINES ON RECORDING THE SUBJECT OF A WORK

~~[To be developed after the initial release of RDA]~~

23.0 Scope

This chapter provides general guidelines and instructions on recording subject relationships between a work and an entity that is the subject of that work. It includes:

1. an explanation of key terms (see 23.1)
2. the functional objectives and principles underlying the general guidelines and instructions in chapter 23 (see 23.2)
3. the core elements for recording subject relationships to entities (see 23.3)
4. the use of identifiers and authorized access points to record subject relationships (see 23.4)
5. instructions on recording elements that provide clarification or justification for the data recorded about relationships:
6. source consulted to cite sources used in determining the subject of a work (see 23.5)
7. cataloguer’s note to assist in the use or revision of the relationship data (see 23.6).

* ***JCA comments/questions:***

1. 6JSC/Chair/8 contains a bullet for “the use of classification numbers to record the objects of subject relationships, but provides no guidelines. My own interpretation is that classification numbers are preferred names (and/or authorized access points) within a classification system, and that special guidelines are not needed. If you agree with that interpretation, should that statement be included explicitly in this chapter?
2. RDA relationship elements do not have relationship designators as such; the relationship designators are refinements of the element. In the case of the subject relationship, any such refinements (if they exist) would be part of the specifications of the authorized subject system, and not something that would be included in RDA. Therefore, I have omitted the usual section relating to relationship designators from this chapter.

23.1 Terminology

**23.1.1 Explanation of Key Terms**

There are a number of terms used in this chapter that have meanings specific to their use in RDA. Some of these terms are explained at 23.1.2–23.1.7.

All terms with a specific technical meaning are defined in the glossary.

**23.1.2 Resource**

The term resource▼ is used in this chapter to refer to a work, expression, manifestation, or item (see 23.1.3).

The term *resource*, depending on what is being described, can refer to:

1. an individual entity (e.g., a single videodisc)

***or***

1. an aggregate of entities (e.g., three sheet maps)

***or***

1. a component of an entity (e.g., a single slide issued as part of a set of twenty, an article in an issue of a scholarly journal).

The term *resource* can refer either to a tangible entity (e.g., an audiocassette) or to an intangible entity (e.g., a Web site).

**23.1.3 Work**

The term work▼ refers to a distinct intellectual or artistic creation (i.e., the intellectual or artistic content).

The term *work* can refer to an individual work, an aggregate work, or a component of a work.

**23.1.4 Access Point**

The terms *access point* and *authorized access point* and *variant access point* are used as follows:

The term access point▼ refers to a name, term, code, etc., representing a specific entity (work, expression, manifestation, item, person, family, corporate body, or other entity that serves as the subject of a work). Access points include both authorized access points and variant access points.

The term authorized access point▼ refers to the standardized access point representing an entity. The authorized access point representing a work, expression, manifestation, item, person, family, or corporate body is constructed using the preferred name for the work, expression, manifestation, item, person, family, or corporate body. The authorized access point representing other entities that serve as the subject of a work is constructed following the guidelines of the authoritative subject system used by the agency creating the data.

The term variant access point▼ refers to an alternative to the authorized access point representing an entity. A variant access point representing an entity is constructed using a variant name for that entity according to the authoritative subject system used by the agency creating the data.

**23.1.5 Authoritative Subject System**

The term authoritative subject system▼ refers to a standard for subject access points and classification numbers used by the agency creating the data. It may be used in determining the name, other identifying attributes, and relationships of an entity used as the subject of a work.

23.2 Functional Objectives and Principles

The data recorded to reflect the relationship between a work and an entity that is the subject of that work should enable the user to find all works that have that entity as a subject.

To ensure that the data created using RDA meet that functional objective, the data should reflect all significant subject relationships between an entity that “is the subject of” that work.

23.3 Core Elements

Include as a minimum at least one subject relationship that is applicable and readily ascertainable.

When identifying the subject of a work, include as a minimum the authorized access point for the entity. An authorized access point includes a controlled subject term or a classification number as defined by an authoritative subject system.

23.4 Subject

CORE ELEMENT

*Subject is a core element. At least one subject relationship that is applicable and readily ascertainable is required.*

*When identifying the subject of a work, the authorized access point representing the entity that is the subject of that work is a core element.*

23.4.1 Basic Instructions on Recording the Subject

23.4.1.1 Scope

Subject ▼ refers to the relationship between a work and an entity that is the subject of ~~(i.e., is “about”)~~ that work.

Such entities and the terms used to describe them are defined in an authoritative subject system.

23.4.1.2 Sources of Information

Take information on the subject of a work from any source.

23.4.1.3 Recording the Subject

Record the subject of the work by using one or both of these techniques:

1. identifier (see 23.4.1.3.1)

***and/or***

1. authorized access point (see 23.4.1.3.2)

23.4.1.3.1 Identifier for the Entity That Is the Subject of the Work

Provide an identifier for the entity that is the subject of the work.

EXAMPLE

[need to add examples]

23.4.1.3.2 Authorized Access Point Representing the Entity That Is the Subject of the Work

Provide an authorized access point representing the entity that is the subject of the work.

An authorized access point includes a controlled subject term or a classification number as defined by the authoritative subject system.

EXAMPLE

[need to add examples]

* ***JCA comment:***  On Gordon’s advice, I propose that the name of the relationship element be simply “subject”. However, in the text of the guidelines — and in some of the captions — I have used the phrase “subject of the work”. I’m not sure whether this is legitimate.

23.5 Source Consulted

23.5.1 Basic Instructions on Recording Sources Consulted

23.5.1.1 Scope

A source consulted▼ is a resource used in determining the relationship between a work and an entity that is the subject of the work.

23.5.1.2 Sources of Information

Take information on sources consulted from any source.

23.5.1.3 Recording Relationship Designators

Cite sources used to determine a subject relationship, followed by a brief statement of the information found.

EXAMPLE

[need to add examples]

* ***JCA comment:*** I included this because other general chapters on relationships do so. However, it is not clear that this should be an RDA instruction or part of the specifications of the authoritative subject system.

23.6 Cataloguer’s Note

23.6.1 Basic Instructions on Making Cataloguer’s Notes

23.6.1.1 Scope

A cataloguer’s note▼ is an annotation that might be helpful for those using or revising the relationship data, or creating an authorized access points representing a related subject.

23.6.1.2 Sources of Information

Take information for use in cataloguer’s notes from any source.

23.6.1.3 Making Cataloguer’s Notes

Make any notes that might be helpful to a cataloguer using or revising the relationship data, or creating an authorized access point for a related subject.

EXAMPLE

[need to add examples]

* ***JCA comment:*** Same comment as on Source Consulted, although I’m more confident in this case that it is appropriate to include in RDA.

## 6. RDA Glossary: Add definitions

Authoritative Subject System A standard for subject access points and/or classification numbers used by the agency creating the data. It may be used in determining the name, other identifying attributes, and relationships of an entity used as the subject of a work.

Subject The relationship between a work and an entity that is the subject of ~~(i.e., is “about”)~~ that work. Such entities and the terms used to describe them are defined in an authoritative subject system.

* ***JSC comment:*** Source consulted and Cataloguer’s note are already defined in general terms in the Glossary.