

Building International Descriptive Cataloging Standards:

The Role of the American Library Association's Committee on Cataloging: Description and Access

CC:DA and Cataloging in the United States

Libraries worldwide have long been faced with the need to organize their collections to allow users to retrieve the resources they need. International standards have been developed for describing resources and the ideas contained within them, along with the mechanisms for transferring and sharing the resulting bibliographic descriptions. These standards are used to describe a wide variety of content and formats held by libraries, including books, manuscripts, musical scores, cartography, and others in physical, electronic, and digital versions. As more and more resources are available digitally from libraries and other online sources, the need for commonly shared standards for describing such material becomes even more important.

The American Library Association (ALA)'s Committee on Cataloging: Description and Access (CC:DA) was established in 1979 to formulate the official ALA policy on descriptive cataloging issues. It is a committee organized under the Metadata and Collections Section (MaCS) of the Core Division of ALA. The Committee is composed of nine voting members, several non-voting *ex officio* representatives, and a dynamic roster of non-voting representatives and liaisons drawn from metadata stakeholder communities from ALA units and non-ALA organizations. The members, representatives and liaisons have a wide array of experience in cataloging all types of library materials. Additional non-voting members include the committee's webmaster and two interns.

CC:DA invites collaborative efforts with other American and international organizations to develop descriptive standards for expanding the scope of the traditional library catalog to include emerging technologies that have not hitherto been covered.. This has historically involved work attendant to the development of the *Anglo-American Cataloging Rules* (AACR2), and subsequently *Resource Description and Access* (RDA). The committee also works closely with the Library of Congress and the Program for Cooperative Cataloging (PCC) on cataloging policy and problems in the use and interpretation of cataloging standards. Representatives from CC:DA work with other ALA committees to coordinate descriptive cataloging policy with developments in the MARC 21 format and in subject cataloging.

Resource Description and Access (RDA) has been developed to replace the earlier *Anglo-American Cataloging Rules* as an internationally accepted standard for descriptive cataloging. It provides a comprehensive set of data elements, guidelines and instructions on formulating data to support resource discovery covering all types of content and media. Underlying RDA is the IFLA Library Reference Model (IFLA LRM). The RDA Steering Committee (RSC) is the international body responsible for developing and maintaining RDA. The North American RDA Committee (NARDAC) is the entity responsible within the larger RDA governance structure for representing multiple constituencies in the North American region. ALA has up to two representatives who serve on NARDAC: the ALA Representative(s) to NARDAC. They are *ex officio* members of CC:DA, and serve as the conduit between CC:DA and NARDAC (and subsequently on to) the RSC. They serve as the conduit between CC:DA and NARDAC, with NARDAC subsequently serving as the conduit between the cataloging constituencies of the North American Regional Group (U.N.) and the RSC. As such, they are *ex officio* members of CC:DA.

Roles of CC:DA

- To make a continuing assessment of the state of the art and suggest the direction of change in the field of descriptive cataloging.
- To recommend solutions to problems relating to bibliographic description and to the choice and form of access points, other than subject access points.
- To initiate proposals for additions to and revisions of the cataloging standard currently supported by ALA, to review proposals initiated by other groups or individuals on such standards, and to develop official ALA positions on such proposals in consultation with other appropriate ALA units and organizations in the United States.
- To transmit to the ALA Representative(s) to the North American RDA Committee (NARDAC) such official ALA positions and to suggest acceptable bases for further development of proposals under consideration.
- To develop official ALA positions on proposed international cataloging policies and standards pertaining to the committee's area of responsibility and to advise the official ALA representative to the organization developing such policies and standards; or, if there is no official ALA representative, to act as the clearinghouse within ALA for review of these policies and standards and to serve as the formal liaison between ALA and the originating organizations.
- To encourage the United States library and information services community to express opinions on issues under consideration through timely dissemination of information in relevant media.
- To keep the profession informed by reporting committee actions promptly through appropriate communication channels.

How to Participate in Cataloging Issues or Questions:

- Subscribe to CC:DA's public email distribution platform (as of 2024, the ALA Connect community "Core CC:DA Public Space")
- Follow developments on CC:DA's web presence.
- Respond to calls for feedback for papers, models, and proposals as distributed on any ALA communication platforms in support of CC:DA's work. These calls can apply to RDA revision proposals, MARC 21 proposals and discussion papers before the MARC Advisory Committee (MAC), new models and standards issued by IFLA, Romanization schema, etc.
- Attend meetings (virtual or in-person) of CC:DA at its semiannual winter and summer meetings.
- Respond to a call for volunteers for new CC:DA task forces. These are periodically announced on CC:DA's public email distribution platform and other cataloging lists.
- Volunteer within another ALA unit or another library organization to serve as its representative or liaison to CC:DA.
- Volunteer to serve as a CC:DA intern or voting member (as of 2024, the Core "Find Committee Volunteer Opportunities", or specific links distributed by email).
- Submit an RDA revision proposal following the instructions in How to Submit a Revision Proposal to CC:DA.

CC:DA Welcomes Your Suggestions:

- In proposing changes to cataloging standards.
- In streamlining the revision process.
- In applying standards for bibliographic control to new and emerging technologies.

How to Contact a CC:DA Member or Liaison:

- Contact the committee or an individual by email using one of the addresses listed on the CC:DA roster, available in the ALA member center [login for full contact information]

Earliest extent version: ©2003, ALA/ALCTS/CCS

Rev: May 31 2012 ALA/ALCTS/CaMMS

Rev: MMM DD 2024 ALA/Core/MaCS