RDA Connect

A Value Proposition for Resource Description

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RDA Connect

An innovative resource discovery system that harnesses the power of RDA to facilitate the transition from AACR2 to RDA for catalogers and enhance the user’s information seeking experience.

**Effectiveness.**
Tools to help and support catalogers effectively transition from AACR2 to RDA, share resources with the cataloging community, and automatically FRBRize their catalogue.

**Enhanced Resources.**
The system has been designed to incorporate the principles of FRBR and RDA, which allow catalogers to create more robust records and create links through bibliographic relationships.

**Improved User Experience.**
Responding to the user’s current needs and well-placed to adapt as those needs change and new resource types become available, this system connects information found within catalogues with the web and allows users to engage with this information in new ways.

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INTRODUCTION

Like many professions, the library, information and archives fields are rapidly changing. This is in large part due to an increased use of and access to a variety of new technologies. It is hardly a new idea to propose that these technologies have changed the way we perform our many roles as information professionals and how we interact with one another and our patrons. As technology continues to be more greatly adopted as well as more accessible, it is also simultaneously evolving, causing a digital revolution. This is not a revolution that has just begun, nor do we get the sense that it is close to being over. As a result, professionals in arguably almost every field are changing in order to evolve with these new technologies in the digital age.

For the cataloging world, the digital revolution has not only greatly affected how we do our jobs, but also affected the contexts and systems within which we work. One of the greatest changes in more than 30 years to affect the cataloging community is replacement of the Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules, 2nd edition (AACR2) with Resource Description & Access (RDA) (Tosaka & Park, 2013). The goal of RDA is “to provide a flexible and extensible framework that can accommodate all types of content and media within rapidly evolving digital environments” (Tosaka & Park, 2013, p. 651). To help the cataloging world facilitate and embrace this change and truly benefit from the advancements made possible through RDA, we present the RDA Connect resource discovery system. The discussion below outlines the RDA Connect system—its target market, how the product addresses user needs, its key features, and, finally, how the user experience will differ from other resource discovery systems.
The RDA Connect system provides its users with the opportunity to interact with information in a new way, in a way that responds to our current information needs, and in a way that takes its users into the ever-changing information world of the 21st Century. The RDA Connect system is an application that combines many principles, including IFLA’S Final Report on Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records (FRBR) and RDA, and features from traditional library applications, like Online Public Access Catalogs (OPACs), while also creating new ways for both libraries and its users to interact with this information. The features of the RDA Connect system will help catalogers transition to using new rules and will also help information seekers access information in new ways, made possible only through applying RDA—all within a single system.

TARGET MARKET

The target market for this product is primarily library administrators, catalogers, staff and patrons; however, members from other cultural heritage institutions, like museums and galleries, publishers, as well as other organizations who manage large quantities of information, like government departments and agencies, could potentially benefit from this system (Hillmann, Coyle, Phipps & Dunsire, 2010). The individuals and groups outlined above make a large target market for this system. However, even though they function in diverse settings and with a range of data, these individuals share a common, fundamental characteristic—the need to manage, describe, evaluate, access, share, and ultimately connect with information.
USER NEEDS & SYSTEM FEATURES

Within the individuals and groups outlined above, I will discuss the specific needs of two user groups: catalogers and information seekers (traditional library patrons). Each of these groups has a varying set of needs; needs that the RDA Connect resource discovery system will meet. Within this discussion, I will also point to how certain features of the RDA Connect system address these needs.

**Catalogers**

The shift from the AACR2 to RDA cataloging rules will require catalogers to change the way they have been working, for some, for many years. This will mean developing an understanding new rules and new systems. For this change to be smoothly adopted, it is essential to respond to the needs of this group through the development of the RDA Connect system.

One of the main advantages of this system is that it incorporates the benefits of FRBR, “including easier searching, focussed results, clustering at the work level, understanding and using bibliographic records, and [...] better placement of data in records, easier copy cataloging and sharing of records and adding new data such as rights management” (Salaba & Zhang, 2007, p. 17). Additionally, this system further integrates a number of features from RDA; specifically, it’s “instructions, specific vocabularies and conventions that permit bibliographic relationships to be presented (Picco & Ortiz Repiso, 2012). All of these aspects are responding to cataloger’s needs, allowing them to work more effectively and more efficiently, as well as learn more quickly as they transition this change.
The RDA Connect system responds to cataloger’s needs and allows for a smooth transition from recording in MAchine-Readable Cataloging (MARC) format to a FRBR, or RDA, structured format, a process also known as FBRBization (Salaba & Zhang, 2007). The RDA Connect system allows both MARC and RDA records to simultaneously co-exist, while also providing a service that automatically transfers existing MARC records to an RDA structured record. The RDA Toolkit and Library and Congress MARC Description pages are also available from within the system, which will help clarify the new rules, as well as their difference from MARC, to catalogers (SirsiDynix, 2012, July 23). Additionally, in order to help catalogers transition as smoothly as possible, the RDA Connect system offers full training and customer support.

**Information Seekers**

Since entering the digital age over the past thirty years, the way we interact with information has greatly changed. Information seekers have greater demands; we expect access to fast, reliable information; we expect to be given enough data to evaluate whether the information meets our needs; we expect to have the ability to choose the format within which this information is carried; and we expect to be able to access this information from wherever we are. These needs are the foundations of the “FRBR record functions (i.e., to find, identify, select, and obtain” (Madison, 2006, p. 14). FRBR was largely influenced by Charles Cutter and IFLA’s Paris Principles, which both observe the utmost importance of the user in the development of a cataloging code or system (Madison, 2006).
With its roots in the FRBR model, RDA is centred on responding to user needs. One of the ways it does this is through the representation of bibliographic relationships. In RDA, representing bibliographic relationships is possible at the entity level through recording identifiers, authorized access points and descriptions—composite, structured, and unstructured (Picco & Ortiz Repiso, 2012). By recording these bibliographic relationships, RDA has given us the potential to enhance the way we structure and organize information (Picco & Ortiz Repiso, 2012). The RDA Connect system harnesses this potential through its semantic web capabilities. By automatically assigning a Uniform Resource Identifier (URI), resources can be identified and classified within the global web environment, which would make it possible to automatically create a meaningful link between resources found within library catalogues not only to one another, but with resources on the web (Picco & Ortiz Repiso, 2012). This, of course, enables users to access this information on a global scale.

**USER EXPERIENCE**

The experience a user will have with RDA Connect will be different from other systems in a number of ways. But, it was also built on user expectations and best practices in order to create a better overall experience. In short, the RDA Connect system will allow its users to do more than ever before, but will do so through a system that is both familiar and enjoyable for users. For catalogers, the system will allow them to become more familiar with the new cataloging rules and format, while offering a point of reference to the previous rules and format, training modules, user support, and linked information from related systems.
For information seekers, the resources catalogers code through RDA Connect will not only be available through traditional OPACs and large union catalogues, like OCLC, but also from within the larger web environment. If users connect with this information through the web, then they will be directed to the RDA Connect system. Through the system, then they will have the ability to sort, relate, and link resources using the foundations of RDA. The system also allows users to create preference lists, save searches, create their own relationships between resources, and tag resources. With the user’s permission, this information will be shared with the larger RDA Connect community, allowing the larger community of users to gain knowledge from the individual.

CONCLUSION

Hoffman argues that “helping users by organizing materials and providing access to information is a fundamental purpose of librarianship and cataloging” (2009, p. 632). If this is true, then we, as information professionals, need to strategically adapt to the ever-changing information environment we live in, in order to better serve our users. Although it is certain that these changes present challenges, we must also acknowledge that these changes represent an opportunity for information professionals to challenge ourselves to find creative solutions, to improve our user’s information-seeking experiences, and to continue our role as leaders in the world of information. The development of new rules and systems is just one of the ways we can achieve these goals.
REFERENCE LIST


