

Making Resource Description and Access (RDA) global

introduction to the Countdown Clock special issue of *Catalogue & Index*

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ABSTRACT

This introduction provides an overview of the articles in the special issue and the context of the countdown clock to the withdrawal of the Original RDA Toolkit as a supported product in May 2027.

KEYWORDS RDA; RDA Toolkit; RDA Steering Committee

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As the countdown clock for the original RDA Toolkit begins ([Welsh, 2026](#)), an era is ending, marking a turning point in the still-young history of the RDA standard. Although only around 15 years have passed since its first publication, these have been years marked by significant activity within the user communities, alongside major changes to the standard itself. It is obvious that this presented a major challenge for everyone involved.

A standard that aims to be international must be flexible and able to adapt to the needs of very different contexts. This was a requirement that the Original Toolkit ([ALA Digital Reference, 2012-2027](#)) could not meet as wished, leading to the further development of the standard in the form of the Official Toolkit ([ALA Digital Reference, 2019-](#)). A milestone in this project was the restructuring of the responsible RDA bodies, which was decided in 2015 ([Dunsire, 2016](#)). Every region of the world now participates directly through a Regional Representative or the Wider Community Engagement Officer in the development of the standard ([Welsh, 2025](#)). Only in this way was such a significant internationalisation possible. A wide variety of experiences, traditions and approaches were brought to the fore and had to be considered.

The following articles aim to describe how these processes work. On the one hand, they cover the efforts of the regions, which are reflected in a wide variety of scenarios relating to the implementation of RDA. At the same time, they also cover the ongoing activities of the stakeholders within the RDA committees themselves, who report on

their experiences and projects. The breadth of the topics covered here illustrates just how diverse the issues and implementation options are.

The twelve months from May 2026 to May 2027 will be filled with further challenges. Through this publication and many other initiatives, the RDA Steering Committee (RSC) and the RDA Board aim to support the user communities, not only during this period but on an ongoing basis. A truly international standard can never be finished, and that is a good thing. RDA is designed to adapt to change, which is only to be expected given the ever-accelerating pace of development in the field of metadata work.

This publication aims to provide an update on the current status of the work and hopes, particularly in the run-up to the countdown clock reaching zero, to highlight a wide range of aspects and thereby offer support.

As already mentioned, cooperation from the regions is essential, and so representatives from very different parts of the world are here to present the work being done in their respective areas. Getaneh Alemu (RSC Wider Community Engagement Officer) reports on Africa, a continent where many parts are still in the early stages of implementing RDA and where there are still many unresolved issues. In contrast, Christian Aliverti (former RDA Board Member for Europe) is able to discuss an implementation in German-speaking countries that has been tried and tested in practice for several years. Also from Europe, Szabolcs Dancs writes about widespread activities with a focus on translation. Trina Soderquist and Hong Cui, as regional representatives for North America, describe the ongoing work there and consider numerous aspects, such as training, as well as the organisational conditions in this region. As a representative of a region only recently represented in the RSC, Felipe Martínez reports on the efforts in Latin America.

Some of the position holders within the RSC are responsible for specific areas without which RDA could not exist or evolve. In his article, Christopher Holden (RSC Technical Team Liaison Officer) outlines the role of the RDA Registry, which is used by many user communities as a starting point for implementation projects. Thorough and effective training is essential when working with a standard. Here, Elisa Sze (RSC Training and Education Officer) provides support to the global community with guidance materials and much more. Jessica Grzegorski (RSC Examples Officer) illustrates in her contribution that RDA is also a standard for special materials, using the DCRMR as an example. Ahava Cohen (EURIG Representative) broadens the focus with her report on the RSC Working Group on Artificial Intelligence.

Through their more general articles, Christine Oliver (RDA Board Chair), James Hennelly (Director, ALA Digital Reference) and Renate Behrens (RSC Chair) aim to provide an overarching perspective on the diverse range of topics. They emphasise collaboration with other standardisation bodies worldwide, the positioning of the RDA standard within the system of models, standards and application profiles, and its

development into a framework standard that can be used for a wide range of very different applications.

Robert Maxwell (RSC Chair-elect) and Anne Welsh (RSC Secretary) provide an outlook for the coming years. Even after the Countdown Clock expires in May 2027, the standard will continue to evolve, and the RSC and the RDA Board, as the responsible bodies, see it as their duty to support the global user communities, whether in new implementations or in the further development of their application profiles. The standard's tried-and-tested organisational structure has proven to be a stable foundation for incorporating the requirements of global communities.

As Chair of the RDA Steering Committee, I would like to express my sincere thanks to everyone involved in these processes for their openness, active participation and patience. Only through mutual understanding can a framework standard such as RDA remain vibrant and continually adapt to new circumstances. All the authors of this publication look forward to receiving feedback and hope for continued fruitful global collaboration.

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