EDITORIAL

Welcome to the December 2025 (213) issue of Catalogue & Index, which is all about RDA, with a focus on the engagement of UK libraries, looking forward to the roll out of Official RDA next year. We are pleased to share that this issue has been curated by members of the UK Committee on RDA (UKCoR), with special thanks to Anastasia Kerameos for her part in coordinating the articles.

If, like many people, you are confused by all the groups (and their acronyms) which are concerned with RDA in the UK then Anastasia Kerameos' informative article will help clarify who is who, what they do, and why RDA matters to you.

Similarly, Anne Welsh's piece 'Xenoglossophobia' attempts to scare away the fear of RDA Toolkit-speak and gives concrete steps and advice in conquering it.

Thurstan Young reports on the British Library's implementation of the Official RDA Toolkit. Although the roll out began in June 2025 it was based upon five years of preparatory work and the development of policy documentation. He discusses the challenges, as well as the procedures, and looks forwards to the next steps.

Gordon Dunsire guides us through the architecture of the WEMI (Work, Expression, Manifestation, and Item) stack, and the flexibility of how it presents with the use of application profiles.

Rounding off the articles in this issue Anastasia Kerameos and William Peaden present the results

CILIP SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP

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of

the 'RDA in the UK implementation survey 2025' which was conducted during the autumn by UKCoR and MDG. This provides the sector with some interesting information about current plans for implementation and engagement with Official RDA, and can also be mapped against a similar survey undertaken in 2013 regarding the adoption of Original RDA in the UK.

In the review section we are pleased to publish Sergio Alonso Mislata's review of *The AI and Data Revolution* by Martin De Saulles.

Our next issue in March will be looking at subject analysis, within classification and subject headings, if you wish to contribute an article on this topic (or indeed any other metadata related one) please contact the editors at catalogueandindex@gmail.com.

Fran Frenzel & Karen F. Pierce, December 2025

UKCoR, EURIG, the RSC, CILIP and you
a personal perspective

Anastasia Kerameos

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ABSTRACT

This article is an introduction to the role UKCoR, EURIG, the RSC, CILIP and the wider metadata community play in the development of the Resource Description and Access (RDA) cataloguing standard.

Introduction

What do UKCoR, EURIG, the RSC and CILIP have in common, apart from being acronyms? RDA of course!

Who are they? In a nutshell, the UK Committee on RDA (UKCoR), which started life as the CILIP-BL Committee on RDA, represents the interests of the UK's library and information professional community. The European RDA Interest Group (EURIG) represents the interests of its European members. The RDA Steering Committee (RSC), previously the Joint Steering Committee for Development of RDA (JSC), maintains the Resource Description and Access (RDA) international cataloguing standard. CILIP (the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals) is, amongst its other roles, co-publisher and copyright holder of RDA.

How does it all work? When I first took on the roles of CILIP representative to EURIG and UKCoR Chair in 2024 I had to draw a diagram to make sense of it. I'm that kind of person. It takes a robust structure, many people and a lot of effort to develop and maintain an international cataloguing standard. The main elements are the RDA Board, the RSC and the co-publishers of the RDA Toolkit. Let's shelve the first and last for the moment and focus on the RSC.

The RSC

As stated in the latest *Policies and Procedures for RSC Operations* document, "the RSC is responsible for the development and content of the RDA standard. Revisions,

consolidations, additions, and other changes may be made to RDA only with RSC approval." (RDA Steering Committee, 2025, p. 1) This structure ensures that all voices are heard, robust discussions are had, and decisions are well-considered before any changes are made to the standard itself. A vital element in this process, as can be seen from the below, is feedback from the community.

"The RSC will:

- Annually update a three-year rolling plan, which includes a development program, based on expertise and user consultation
- Use defined working practices to develop the standard
- Liaise with the RDA user communities via the regional representatives
- Oversee working groups
- Advise the RDA Board and RDA Fund Trustees on programs and activities appropriate for the receipt of financial support from the RDA Fund
- Collaborate strategically with other international groups." (RDA Steering Committee, 2025, p. 2)

The RSC relies on the work of its officers: Chair, Secretary, Education & Orientation officer, Examples Editor, Technical Team Liaison officer, Translation Team Liaison officer, Wider Community Engagement Officer. A key opportunity for UK practitioners to meet several of the team will be at UKCoR's RDA Day event which will take place on 13 March 2026 in Bristol. It is a great pleasure to announce that Renate Behrens, the current Chair of the RSC, will be the keynote speaker for the day and is indeed also attending the full MDG conference (Metadata & Discovery Group, 2025).

As RDA is an international standard, the RSC places great importance on representation from all communities and is working to establish regional groups for each of the geographic regions of Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, North America and Oceania. El Grupo RDA América Latina y el Caribe (Grupo RDA ALyC), the most recent addition, was officially established in January 2025 (Quiroz Ubierna, 2025); Africa and Asia are the last groups which have yet to be established.

An area which will be of interest to UK practitioners is the RSC's work with other international groups. It has established agreements with IFLA[1], ISSN[2], LC Network Development and MARC Standards Office[3], and the Share Family[4]. In addition to the work of its Working Groups (Examples, Technical, Translations, Artificial Intelligence, Religions, Archives, and Extent), the RDA/MARC 21 Alignment Task Force and the MARC/RDA Working Group[5] will be of particular interest to those who want to better

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[1] https://www.ifla.org/
[2] https://www.issn.org/
[3] https://www.loc.gov/marc/ndmso.html
[4] https://www.share-family.org/
[5] https://www.loc.gov/marc/mac/MARC-RDA_Working_Group.html

understand what it means to catalogue in RDA when the encoding system you use is MARC21. The alignment between RDA elements and MARC21 encodings are incorporated in the element pages within the RDA Toolkit, but also freely available as a list via the RDA Registry site[6].

If I have managed to pique your interest in the work of the RSC then there are agreements, policy documents, strategic plans, proposals and responses, related resources, news announcements and more, all of which are openly available online[7] to anyone with an interest in the history of cataloguing standards. More importantly, the RDA Toolkit website[8], which is where all information related to the RDA standard now lives, is the place to go for up-to-date news on RDA whether it be notices of meetings, news of appointments, announcements on proposals and discussion papers, presentations or Toolkit release notes. And of course, the RDA Toolkit YouTube channel[9] content is a must!

EURIG

Each regional RSC group has members. For EURIG, eligibility for becoming a member and entitlement afforded by membership are defined in Articles 3 and 5 respectively of the EURIG Cooperation Agreement, dated 3rd May 2019.

Membership:

- Any European national bibliographic agency
- Other European institutions and organisations with an interest in the use and implementation of cataloguing codes in Europe
- Other agencies, institutions or organisations with a demonstrable interest and commitment to RDA that would not otherwise be represented by an RDA region. (EURIG Cooperation Agreement, 2019, pp. 1-2)

Entitlement:

- Attendance at General and Special meetings of EURIG members
- Participation in all discussions
- Putting forward motions
- Serving on Working Groups (EURIG Cooperation Agreement, 2019)

EURIG currently has fifty-four members, of which four are from the UK: the British Library, the National Library of Scotland, BDS (Bibliographic Data Services Ltd.) and of course CILIP. The CILIP representative to EURIG is nominated by UKCoR and serves on both the UKCoR and the Metadata & Discovery Group (MDG, a CILIP Special Interest

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[6] https://www.rdaregistry.info/Aligns/alignRDA2M21B.html for MARC Bibliographic and https://www.rdaregistry.info/Aligns/alignRDA2M21A.html for MARC Authority.
[7] https://www.rdatoolkit.org/rsc
[8] https://www.rdatoolkit.org/
[9] https://www.youtube.com/@RDAToolkitVideo

Group) committees. They also serve as a member of the EURIG Editorial Committee. Yes, just like an onion there are many layers and I'm only touching the surface here! Do you see now why a diagram was needed? I should add that it's not always the case that the CILIP representative to EURIG is elected as Chair to UKCoR. It just happened that way at the last vote.

EURIG members meet annually, with communication taking place throughout the year via email and online collaboration tools. While I have been in post EURIG has not submitted to the RSC any proposals for changes to the standard; responses have however been submitted to several proposals put forward by other groups. Topics under discussion in 2025 included: aggregates and diachronic works, the Corporate Body entity, and numerals associated with given names. The current call for comments has come from the Extent Working Group, set up as a Task and Finish group, who have submitted eight documents of recommendations on developing the extent elements in RDA[10].

UKCoR

Whilst EURIG seeks input from its members, those members are in some cases representing the views and interests of their own institutions and in other cases expected to represent the interest of smaller groups and individuals within their communities. UKCoR represents the interests of all UK metadata professionals who use, or plan to use, the RDA standard.

UKCoR's constitution was updated and revised earlier this year.

"The committee shall be the national committee in the UK responsible for contributing to the development and maintenance of Resource Description and Access (RDA). The functions of the committee shall be:

1. to contribute to the RDA development programme, and to the maintenance and governance of RDA;

2. to represent the interests of the UK library and information professional community regarding all aspects of RDA;

3. to ensure that representatives of the RDA Europe Region are briefed on the position of the UK Community regarding all aspects of the governance, development and maintenance of RDA;

4. to support implementation and development of RDA in the UK." (UK Committee on RDA, 2025, p. 1)

UKCoR works in collaboration with other groups and organisations to deliver those objectives, employing a variety of methods and engaging in activities which ensure the

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[10] https://www.rdatoolkit.org/rsc/extent-working-group

committee's limited resources are put to best use. As the countdown begins to 11 May 2027, the date when Original RDA will no longer be available as an interactive resource, much of the committee's focus will be on supporting the UK community in making the transition from Original to Official RDA. Having said that, we know that we need to continue to provide for every level of interest and to cover both theory and practice, ranging from complete beginner to specific questions on implementation. The UK metadata community's input is key to this work.

UKCoR would like to thank:

- the editors of Catalogue & Index for allowing us to take over the December issue;
- everyone who took the time to complete the RDA in the UK implementation survey, the results of which are published in this same issue;
- MDG Scotland (MDGS) for hosting an RDA Agony Aunt chat during their November lunchtime MDGS Bites session - some great questions were submitted for that session which we will be returning to over the next few months;
- WHELF and MDG for hosting and running an UnCataloguing workshop in the summer;
- MDG for continuing to embrace RDA Day as the closing party to their conference;
- CILIP for hosting our web page and engaging with us to improve access to RDA-related resources for their members and the wider community.

Your year-round opportunity to engage with UKCoR and others in the UK on anything RDA is via our discussion list, LIS-RDA@jiscmail.ac.uk[11]. This is where the committee and the wider community post items such as announcements of forthcoming RDA-related activities; RSC Proposal and Discussion Papers to which feedback is sought; updates on the activities of projects, Working groups and Task & Finish groups. It is your space to ask any RDA-related question no matter how basic you think it may be and share your RDA-related experiences for the benefit of others. The committee will on occasion post questions and case studies, but the real power lies with the individuals who come together to form a community that openly debates, shares and actively engages.

CILIP

At this point let me bring the RDA Board and the RDA Toolkit back off the shelf. The RDA Board is responsible for setting the strategic direction for the development of RDA and for its delivery via the Toolkit and print products. CILIP, as co-publisher and co-copyright holder, has a seat on that board. The current CILIP representative to the RDA Board is Jenny Wright. The RDA Copyright Holders' Agreement, valid to 31 August 2028, details the responsibilities of each party and the territories from which they

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[11] https://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/cgi-bin/webadmin?A0=LIS-RDA

receive royalties ([Resource Description and Access (RDA) Copyright Holders Agreement 2023, 2023](#)).

In its previous incarnation (the CILIP-BL Committee on RDA) UKCoR was described on the CILIP website as an Associate group. As CILIP redesigns its website and member offer, UKCoR have been invited to upgrade the content offered via the committee's page[12], contribute more widely to CILIP's training offer and recommend the inclusion of RDA related resources. As the UK's champion for the information sector, CILIP has an important role to play across all elements which affect metadata work - from standards to suppliers, education, recruitment and advocacy - and very specifically RDA.

You

In conclusion, why should you care? This may be the smallest section of this article by far, but it's an important one.

If, like me, you are a metadata professional (hopeful, new or old hand – I occupy all three worlds!) then you are a crucial part of this ecosystem and have a role to play even if your institution has no intention of implementing RDA in the near future. As professionals, our skills and knowledge must develop according to the latest requirements of our profession, regardless of our current employer's expectations of us. We are also the only ones who can drive change. RDA may seem extremely daunting at first but, as with most things, when you actively engage with it you will come to a lightbulb moment after which it simply becomes your new norm. And that's a promise.

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[12] https://www.cilip.org.uk/page/UKCoR

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Xenoglossophobia
taming the fear of all the jargon

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Beginning Cataloguing

ABSTRACT

Feeling overwhelmed by cataloguing jargon? This paper examines xenoglossophobia - the anxiety caused by unfamiliar jargon - within the evolving landscape of bibliographic standards. It traces the evolution of terminology from AACR2 through FRBR and the IFLA Library Reference Model, highlighting how changes have overwhelmed professionals. The author advocates confidence-building strategies, open-access resources like the RDA Registry, and cross-disciplinary learning, particularly from computer science. By encouraging collaboration, self-service strategies, and continuous learning the article advocates for sustained professional development to ensure adaptability and resilience in metadata workflows. Make jargon work for you, not against you!

Xeno-glosso-what?

There is no little irony in titling a jargon-busting article with a term from studies into language acquisition which is derived from the Greek, but I am grateful to UK Committee on RDA (UKCoR) Chair Anastasia Kerameos for suggesting it to me since I believe it really does sum up the barrier I see most often in the training room – a fear (*phobia*) of foreign (*xeno*) languages (*glosso*).

In fact jargon-busting is such a powerful tool in the cataloguing training room that I don't even ask clients if they want it – it's fundamental to making the room a safe space and I open nearly every session by repeating my observation that despite the fact we all acknowledge cataloguing and metadata as jargon-heavy, we lapse into it and that as a result nobody should ever feel (or be made to feel) uncomfortable for asking what a word or acronym means. "Few cataloguers do it on purpose," I say. "Nobody springs forth from the womb knowing instinctively that MARC 245 is the title field. And yet, put a bunch of us in a room together and we'll all start '245ing' at the drop of an unthinking hat. Asking us to explain what something means is doing us a favour and saving us from ourselves."

"The" Glossary

It is a truth universally acknowledged that in Anglo-American cataloguing the jargon we used remained largely stable until the 1990s. We could locate most of the terms we needed in 'Appendix D: Glossary' of AACR2 (*Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules* 2nd edition)[1], and we soon learned that these followed a long tradition of cataloguing vocabulary in the classic texts we studied at library school: Charles Cutter, Charles Jewett, S. R. Ranganathan, Antonio Panizzi, and the (in)famous Mr Dewey were baked in, alongside various publications from the Library of Congress, OCLC and the British Library. If we hadn't attended library school ourselves, we could ask trusted colleagues, and they would provide explanations and point us to the core texts. Our jargon came from a limited range of sources and was, comparatively speaking, easy to assimilate. New professionals arrived at workplaces with fresh buzzwords that kept our communal, internalised glossary refreshed and up-to-date, and conferences and LIS-serves gave us opportunities to ask questions without fear of judgement.

FRBRisation

As a library student in the 1990s who had a Masters in English Literature and did not approve of the post-modern separation of Poetry into that favoured by the general reader and that studied in the academic canon, it was with great trepidation that I observed the development, promotion and reception of *Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records* (FRBR)[2]. In early draft form and fuelling some of the exciting class activities in our computer labs (to which only Library and Information Science, Computer Studies and Economics students had automatic access in my year-group), it was not something I found I could discuss with my then cataloguing mentors. They regarded it as a purely academic exercise and something for "the techies" to worry about.

At CIG[3] conferences speakers from the British Library gave inspiring overviews but the general atmosphere was that what we know now as the WEMI (Work Expression Manifestation Item) model was a "nice to know" rather than a "need to know". Cataloguers seemed divided into those who believed it would help the LMS vendors facet our catalogues and those who worried very intensely that how *we* did *our* jobs would change drastically.

For generations, those working outside the specific areas of rare books and music cataloguing were concerned with starting with the *publication in hand* (most often called "the book in hand") and working outwards from it to record information that could be predicted to help a notional library user find it. In music there was a need to record more nuanced relationships and in rare books we worked with the concept of Bibliography of *the ideal copy* (the publication as close as we could uncover to its state

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[1] Joint Steering Committee for Revision of AACR, 2005

[2] IFLA Study Group on the Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records, 1998 and IFLA Study Group on the Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records, 2009

[3] CILIP Cataloguing and Indexing Group, known today as CILIP Metadata & Discovery Group.

as it rolled off the printing press before the passage of time left us with only a fragment of the materials output by the Early Modern printroom), but these were regarded as specialisms and had their own plenteous literature providing their own vocabulary and jargon for practitioners within them.

And lo, it came to pass that as FRBR became more embedded in our way of thinking and ultimately was expanded into what we now know as the IFLA LRM (Library Reference Model)[4] which in turn became the Ur-text for modern cataloguing, embedded as it is in all other standards and guidelines, cataloguers who had not realised that it was indeed a revolution in thinking about how we catalogue, became increasingly bombarded with new terminology at such a rapid pace that it felt somewhat overwhelming. And xenoglossophobia took hold, first of individuals, then of groups, then of the majority of our professional class.

Tackling the Issue Head On

If you accept my assertion that Anastasia has identified the name for our pain (xenoglossophobia), then we can start to take steps to diminish it. I've read a lot of academic literature about it the last few months and really like the summary Lingoda published on its blog (Maciejewski Cortez, 2024). It shares the steps the academic articles agree can "cure" the infection:

1. **Identify and understand your fear.** …

2. **Improve your confidence.** …

3. **Be easy on yourself.** Remember that you are a learner. … [Since cataloguing models are in constant beta, we are all learners, always]

4. **Lower the stakes.** Seek out one-on-one conversations …

5. **Accept your mistakes**. Don't be discouraged by … a mistake.

As with most of my writing, in this article I am tackling item 2 in Lingoda's list. Specifically, I hope to help you improve your confidence in cataloguing language by highlighting several sources that you can use to self-serve when you encounter jargon that confuses you. As with all acts of information literacy, I am assuming that you will ask trusted colleagues, because the research consistently shows us that is what human beings do. (As a side note, I have assumed over the years that the general outcry about Too Much Jargon comes from an increase in conversations about jargon that do not arrive at a nice pithy answer – so that not only the person who asks the question, but the trusted colleague is left wondering if they have the meaning quite clear).

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[4] Riva, P., Le Bœuf, P. and Žumer, M., 2024

Two Glossaries

As sure as AACR2 became RDA (*Resource Description and Access*), the Glossary in the RDA Toolkit became the first place to check when you don't know what a term means. Indeed, often it is the case that the text of the Toolkit is the place in which one encounters a piece of cataloguing vocabulary for the first time. For example, when people encounter the RDA text for the first time, it is not uncommon for them to encounter the instruction "Record a structured description" and it is not unreasonable for them to wonder what the authors of RDA mean, precisely by ***a structured description***. The Glossary provides this definition:

> "A recording method that is a human-readable string that is a full or partial description of an entity that is based on a string encoding scheme, or is a controlled term that describes an aspect of an entity. Includes an access point or a controlled term taken from a vocabulary encoding scheme." ('Glossary', 2025)

It is highly likely (and highly recommended) that they then look up "string encoding scheme". In the Glossary they will find that a ***string*** is defined as "A sequence of signs, symbols, or a combination of signs or symbols, intended to be treated as a unit." ('Glossary', 2025) ***String encoding scheme*** is defined as "A set of string values and an associated set of rules that describe a mapping between that set of strings and a value of an element" ('Glossary', 2025) and there are two useful *Use for* notes, which provide the acronym ***SES*** and another term that is being treated within RDA as a string encoding scheme, ***syntax encoding scheme***. Those with backgrounds in Linguistics or Computer Science may be able to debate whether these are equivalent or not, but "*Use for* syntax encoding scheme" lets us know that within RDA we should treat them as the same thing. In other words, this *Use for* is a classic Scope Note as we would understand it within classical cataloguer jargon – it defines within this resource a term that, perhaps, outside this resource could be understood in a different more nuanced way.

Within the RDA Toolkit, as well as appearing in the Glossary, each element has its definition at the top of its webpage. For example, we find the page for ***court reporter corporate body*** (Entities > Expression > court reporter corporate body) opens with its "Definition and Scope" as "A corporate body who contributes to an expression by preparing the opinions of a court for publication." ('court reporter corporate body', 2019)

If you or your organisation does not subscribe to the RDA Toolkit, you may be wondering how you would find these definitions. The answer is that while the Toolkit itself is a commercial product subject to the same copyright laws as any other, its publishers and the RDA Board and RDA Steering Committee also publishe an Open Access resource on Github, the *RDA Registry*[5]. Here you can find the definitions whenever you encounter them in the general RDA cataloguing literature. To take our example of ***court reporter corporate body*** we can see that the Registry has defined the

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[5] https://www.rdaregistry.info

label "has court reporter corporate body" as "Relates an expression to a corporate body who contributes to an expression by preparing the opinions of a court for publication." (['has court reporter corporate body', 2025](#))

You can see that even if you have no need to use the Registry for technical purposes (such as setting up a Linked Data project), you can use it as a *de facto* Glossary.

Computer Science Vocabulary

You may be wondering why the Registry provides its definitions in a slightly different structured format from the Toolkit itself. The answer is that the Registry's primary purpose is to provide "linked data and Semantic Web representations of the entities, elements, and terminologies approved by the RDA Steering Committee (RSC)" ([RDA Registry, 2025](#)). It is used by designers of LIMS and apps and, indeed, is used within the RDA Toolkit itself to ensure that the Glossary and other locations of definitions are consistent.

The use I am highlighting, as a human being who wants to understand terminology, is a secondary one. And this, in turn, highlights the point at which many cataloguers began to feel that they had fallen behind with new cataloguing vocabulary. FRBR was not, as some people believed in the 1990s, a document that was the business of systems librarians, LMS vendors and others with a specialist set of technical skills within libraries. It was, arguably, the first of a set of documents that highlighted the increasingly technical set of skills that has become core within the library profession. Whereas in the days of the card and the dictionary catalogue (the primary technology when I entered the profession in the early 1990s) a strong set of critical skills was often assumed – the old cliché into which I too fall of studying Literature at undergraduate level and then taking a Masters in LIS – and knowledge of Computing seen as an "added extra", now we see the curriculum for career entrants remains focused on Customer Service and Management but has emphasised technical knowledge to such an extent that there has had to be a call for an increase in critical thinking to be taught explicitly.

The LRM and RDA heralded a set of vocabulary that has been seen by many of us as "new" whilst those from a computing background have been familiar with it for a very long time and are interested only in the scope notes that Librarianship applies. Terms like **application profile**, **range**, **element**, and **entity diagram** felt alien and, quite frankly baffling, to many of us when we first encountered FRBR and then Original RDA. When I encountered terms I thought of as "computer-y" at cataloguing conferences, I followed my hunch and very quickly learned to have my phone ready at Google so I could search for "computer science [new-to-me term] definition." Try it for yourself:

- Computer science "application profile" definition
- Computer science "range" definition
- Computer science "element" definition
- Computer science "entity diagram" definition

Of course, where LRM defines a specific definition, or RDA does, we should always go by that, but as someone whose mother tongue is Scots (only recently recognised by the Scottish Parliament as an official language of Scotland), still today I often have to look up English words for things, or double-check if a word I use is actually Scots and not English. So why wouldn't Computer Scientists use terms from their professional language without perhaps realising they were specialist at all?

In short: if you find yourself confused by a new term, consider it may be an old term within Computer Science and use a Computer Science subject glossary for it.

The Extent of the Issue

Some of the vocabulary I have used in this article, and certainly the ways to find its definitions, may help you to unpack the next big topic that is under discussion within RDA. Thomas Brenndorfer and the other members of the Extent Working Group have been dealing with inconsistencies of which we are aware in how extent (such as the number of leaves or pages in a book and the running time of a recording of music) is recorded. In MARC terms, we are in the 3XX area[6]. Out for constituency review at the moment is a suite of proposals that aims to make the approach we take as cataloguers more consistent across different formats and disciplinary backgrounds ([Ready for Feedback: Proposals from the Extent Working Group, 2025](#)). This includes disciplinary issues like the rare books cataloguing community's approach to pages versus leaves and cultural issues like the Jewish cataloguing community's need for numbering to be dealt with in a way that makes the way their religious books are numbered no longer seen as an exception to a "norm" that was established in a limited cultural environment.

The proposals also consider the use of **SES** (those **String Encoding Schemes** we defined earlier) to which I alerted you earlier in this article, and which, much like **Application Profiles** has been oft-quoted as the jargon that has broken the will of many an experienced cataloguer who does not have a degree in Computer Science.

The UKCoR is keen to receive feedback from UK cataloguers on these proposals, and I commend them to you as a good way to develop your vocabulary hunter skills. None of the vocabulary used is jargon for its own sake – it's all modern cataloguing vocabulary that I would argue it is useful to know.

Start with the Glossary (Toolkit if you have it, Registry if you don't). If you do have Toolkit access, make use of the Guidance section, which even includes a section on Terminology in which the sources of RDA vocabulary are highlighted.

If you come across terms that aren't in the Glossary and aren't "standard common English" ask yourself whether they might be "standard common English" to someone who has training in Computer Science and see if you can track them down that way, the way that non-legally-trained law librarians have to learn the vocabulary of the Law.

[6] ['3XX - Physical Description, Etc. Fields - General Information', 2024](#)

Know that as a librarian, we each have special skills in tracking down and learning the subject disciplines of our library users, and that by using these skills we have, in fact, nothing to fear.

And if you really get stuck, post a question to the UKCoR's email list, LIS-RDA[7]. It's our own friendly, UK list, separate from the RDA-L on ALA Core[8], and nobody there will judge you.

Finally, What Does an RDA Application Profile Look Like?

Well, as a self-confessed old-timer English Lit graduate, and speaking purely for myself and not for any of my clients or previous employers, I am happy to say that it can be a spreadsheet, or it can be a set of Policy Statements in the Toolkit (set your Toolkit to show BL Policy Statements for an example of this), or it can be a wiki that links to the Toolkit after or before sharing your internal policy choices.

And, as a rare books person in my soul, I always point people to the cataloguing manual DCRMR (*Descriptive Cataloguing of Rare Materials RDA Edition*)[9] which is structured in the same way as its predecessor DCRM, but links through to the appropriate parts of the Toolkit as well as providing examples and specific policy choices that the editors have made. The editors are also providing Policy Statements embedded in the Toolkit for the convenience of those of us who catalogue rare books and have access to the Toolkit. I promise I'm not trying to make you learn rare books jargon on top of everything else - I commend it to you as a resource which uses our old, familiar cataloguing vocabulary in real sentences alongside the new-to-most-of-us LRM- and RDA-speak. Communication is at the heart of all we do, and we should find ways to be as kind to ourselves as we try to be to all our library service users.

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Official RDA Toolkit implementation
a report on progress

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ABSTRACT

This article outlines the British Library's progress in implementing the Official RDA Toolkit. It describes the key activities and challenges encountered during preparation and implementation as well as next steps.

Background

In June 2025 the British Library began to roll out its implementation of the Official RDA Toolkit to cataloguing staff. This followed a five-year process of developing policy documentation both within and outside the Toolkit to facilitate its use. The British Library's business plan for adopting the Official RDA Toolkit was founded on its potential for addressing some of the strategic challenges it faces as an organisation in managing collection metadata. These challenges have been set out in successive Collection Metadata strategies: *Unlocking the value* (British Library, 2015) , *Foundations for the future* (British Library, 2019), and the most recent, *Sustainability through change* (British Library, 2023), which is taking the British Library from 2023 through until 2030. The scope of and schedule for implementation has been influenced by external factors, available technical infrastructure, partner organisations, communities of practice and the planned timeline for decommissioning the Original Toolkit.

When the Official RDA Toolkit was first published in December 2019, it and the IFLA Library Reference Model which underpins it were central to the British Library's proposals for an internal Target Metadata Model that would enable the convergence of collection metadata standards and break down the internal silos which are a barrier to productivity and discovery. These silos include the separate metadata schema used to catalogue published textual content, sound and moving image-based content and archival content. The British Library's migration from Aleph to ALMA as its new Integrated Library System will offer the chance to realise, at least in part, those aspirations which the Target Metadata Model set out. The first stage of implementing

ALMA during 2025 has involved the British Library's migration of metadata for published textual content encoded in the MARC 21 format; a migration of metadata for sound and moving image-based content to ALMA is planned for 2026. Separate system solutions are currently being explored for archival and manuscript metadata. All of these developments follow the ransomware attack in October 2023 which took the majority of British Library legacy systems offline for varying periods of duration.

Challenges

In creating a set of policy documentation which would support its usage of the Official RDA Toolkit, the British Library was presented with a number of challenges. One challenge was the degree of flexibility which RDA now allows for its application. Whereas the Original Toolkit contains around two hundred and fifty optional additions, omissions and alternatives, the Official RDA Toolkit contains over four thousand options and conditional options. The British Library needed to set up a process whereby it could populate the Official RDA Toolkit with local policy statements which corresponded to these options. Due to the scale of this task, the British Library developed a batch process whereby policy statements could be created and edited in an offline spreadsheet, then uploaded to the Official RDA Toolkit's online content management system in large groupings using an XSLT transform rather than individually by manual intervention. It also developed a list of standardised "boilerplate" words and phrases which could be used and reused for the purpose of generating policy statements more efficiently and consistently.
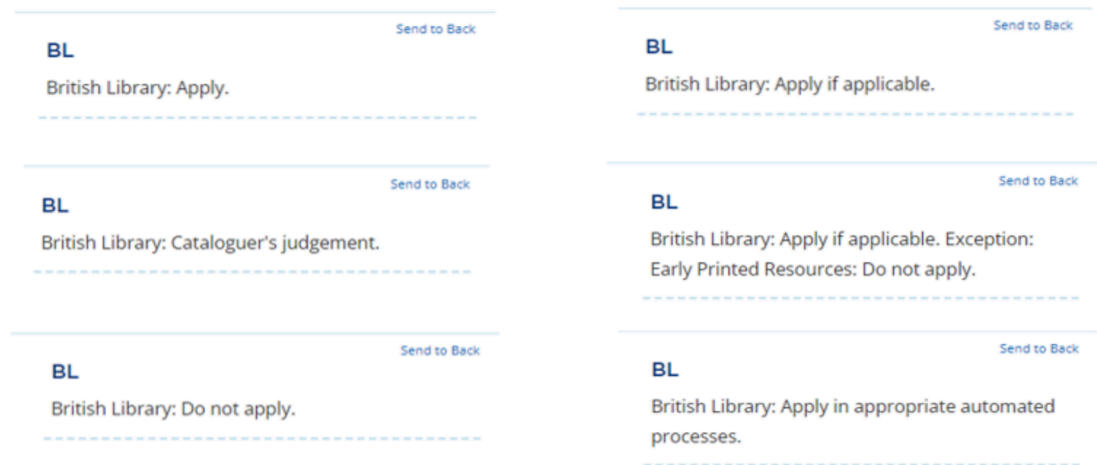

Figure 1: Boilerplate words and phrases used to create policy statements in the Official RDA Toolkit.

Another aspect of the Official RDA Toolkit's flexibility rests on what it requires for the minimum description of a resource entity. This is more limited in scope than the set of core (and core if applicable) elements specified by the Original Toolkit. In addition, the Official RDA Toolkit's structure is different from that of the Original Toolkit. On the one hand, the Original Toolkit is linear in nature, subdivided into numerically sequential chapters and appendices, each of which are further subdivided by pages and section

numbers. On the other hand, documentation in the Official RDA Toolkit is more granular in nature, with a greater reliance on linking functionality to navigate between documents and without numerically sequential ordering. These structural changes and those involving minimum descriptions reflect an optimisation of the Official RDA Toolkit for future facing, linked data and fully relational applications. By contrast, the Original Toolkit's structure and descriptive requirements are based on more traditional flat file or bibliographic and authority cataloguing paradigms. However, the British Library continues to encode its cataloguing metadata using the relatively flat structure of MARC 21. In order to serve its catalogue users as well as maintain its bibliographic products, the British Library also specifies various sets of elements which must be included (and included if applicable) for effective resource description.

As a means of addressing the structural and descriptive challenges set out above, it was necessary for the British Library to build an intermediation layer between its local guidance and the Official RDA Toolkit so that both could be used in tandem. Two spreadsheet-based application profiles were set up to reflect the sequential order of fields and subfields in the MARC 21 bibliographic and authority formats. These application profiles contain various features, including mappings from MARC 21 encoding to their equivalent RDA elements and recording methods. They also list the RDA elements which the British Library requires to be recorded in one or more iterations, depending on the type of bibliographic entity being described. The application profiles are linked to both the MARC 21 format documentation maintained by Library of Congress and the Official RDA Toolkit maintained by ALA Digital Reference. In addition, they are linked to detailed policy documentation created by the British Library and hosted locally on Microsoft SharePoint. The British Library's detailed local policy documentation ranges in granularity, in some cases covering individual elements whilst in others covering whole workflows. Collectively, the application profiles and detailed policy documents have gone on to form the British Library's new Cataloguing Hub.

	Workflow	MARC encoding	Element	Domain	Range	Link to RDA Toolkit	Recording method	First instance	Additional instances
129	MONO	046 $a, $c	Date of publication	manifestation	timespan	rdam:P30011	structured description	Early print only - If applicable	No
130	GEN	082 04 $a	Subject	work	NA	rdaw:P10256	identifier	Contemporary only - Mandatory	No
131	GEN	082 04 $223	Source consulted	work	manifestation	rdaw:P10406	identifier	Contemporary only - Mandatory	No
132	GEN	100 $a, b, c, d, q	Access point for person	person	nomen	rdaa:P50377	structured description	If applicable	No
133	GEN	100 $e	Creator person of work	work	person	rdaw:P10437	structured description	Optional	No
134	GEN	11X $a, b, c, d, n, d	Access point for corporate body	corporate body	nomen	rdaa:P50375	structured description	If applicable	No
135	GEN	11X $e	Creator corporate body of work	work	corporate body	rdaw:P10531	structured description	Optional	No
136	GEN	130 0# $a, f, h, k, l, n, p, s	Access point for expression	expression	nomen	rdae:P20310	structured description	If applicable	No
137	GEN	130 0# $a, k, n, p	Access point for work	work	nomen	rdaw:P10223	structured description	If applicable	No
138	GEN	130 $f	Date of expression	expression	timespan	rdae:P20214	structured description	If applicable	No
139	GEN	130 $h	Content type	expression	NA	rdae:P20001	structured description	If applicable	No
140	GEN	130 $k	Category of expression	expression	NA	rdae:P20331	structured description	If applicable	No
141	GEN	130 $l	Language of expression	expression	NA	rdae:P20006	structured description	If applicable	No
143	GEN	130 $n	Numbering of part	work	NA	rdaw:P10012	structured description	If applicable	No
145	GEN	130 $p	Part of work	work	work	rdaw:P10019	structured description	If applicable	No
149	GEN	240 $a, f, h, k, l, n, p, s	Access point for expression	expression	nomen	rdae:P20310	structured description	If applicable	No
150	GEN	240 $f	Date of expression	expression	timespan	rdae:P20214	structured description	If applicable	No
151	GEN	240 $h	Content type	expression	NA	rdae:P20001	structured description	If applicable	No
152	GEN	240 $k	Category of expression	expression	NA	rdae:P20331	structured description	If applicable	No
153	GEN	240 $l	Language of expression	expression	NA	rdae:P20006	structured description	If applicable	No
155	GEN	240 $n	Numbering of part	work	NA	rdaw:P10012	structured description	If applicable	No
157	GEN	240 $p	Part of work	work	work	rdaw:P10019	structured description	If applicable	No
159	GEN	240 $a, k, n, p	Access point for work	work	nomen	rdaw:P10223	structured description	If applicable	No
160	GEN	245 $a	Title proper	manifestation	nomen	rdam:P30156	unstructured description	Mandatory	No
161	GEN	245 $b	Other title information	manifestation	NA	rdam:P30142	unstructured description	If applicable	No

Figure 2: Excerpt from bibliographic application profile filtered for monograph cataloguing.

Apart from the Official RDA Toolkit's flexibility and structure, a further challenge encountered by the British Library as part of implementation was the introduction of new concepts which had hitherto not been covered or only partially covered by MARC 21. These new concepts include data provenance, diachronic works, manifestation statements and representative expressions. In order to provide the means to encode these concepts within MARC 21 going forward, the British Library recommended to the RDA Board that a MARC/RDA Working Group be set up. This was along the lines of a previous group which existed to implement changes in MARC 21 reflective of the Original Toolkit. A MARC/RDA Working Group was established and incorporated members of the MARC Steering Group, RDA Steering Committee, staff from several vendors in the metadata supply chain and cataloguing specialists. During its time active the MARC/RDA Working Group drafted and presented MARC change proposals to the MARC Advisory Committee. The change proposals resulted in all of the aforementioned concepts being accommodated by new encoding at the field and subfield level in the MARC bibliographic and authority formats. In the case of data provenance, new appendices were established in MARC 21 so that different categories of data provenance could be recorded if the need arose. The British Library's first phase of implementing the Official RDA Toolkit will not include the encoding of new elements covering data provenance, diachronic works, manifestation statements and representative expressions. Any adoption of these elements will follow an initial, largely business as usual approach to cataloguing outputs and consultations with partner organisations in the wider metadata supply chain.

Roll Out

The British Library's roll out of the Official RDA Toolkit to staff was preceded by a period of user acceptance testing for the policy statements, application profiles and detailed policy guidance described in the previous section. In January 2025 a pool of cataloguers representing various workflows was given an in-person orientation of the Official RDA Toolkit and the British Library's accompanying policy documentation. This was followed by the opportunity for questions and answers. Afterwards, there was a period of self paced learning during which the testers were able to access a variety of supporting materials made available through the British Library's instance of Learning Hub. Testers were then given the opportunity to catalogue a range of resources reflecting their individual specialisms, using scanned images and spreadsheet-based record templates. Between March and May, the evidence from completed records, including written and verbal feedback from testers was gathered. This evidence was used to refine local guidance in advance of a general roll out to cataloguing staff. The process of user acceptance testing identified that there was scope for updating guidance documentation and filling in gaps on the one hand. On the other hand, it identified the need for making self-paced learning more interactive in nature and capable of supporting varied learning styles. To address the latter needs, new resources were added to Learning Hub. Slide presentations with text-based notes were supplemented with equivalents using AI generated voice overs; true/false and

multiple-choice quiz games were added to support Official RDA Toolkit and Cataloguing Hub navigation.

The general roll out of Official RDA began in June 2025 and its first phase concluded in September. Although cataloguing staff were the main focus of the first phase, some technical support staff and senior management also took part. In order to manage the process of orientation more effectively following the in-person orientation sessions, the Learning Hub was used to generate weekly reports of progress on self-paced learning. Once participants had viewed and completed the required training and quiz content, they were given access to scanned images of resources and spreadsheet-based record templates. As with user acceptance testing, staff were invited to submit verbal and written feedback in order to further refine British Library training and policy documentation in support of the Official RDA Toolkit. The first phase of rolling out Official RDA to staff has now concluded. It has been paused to allow for the implementation of ALMA to take place. Cataloguing staff who previously used the Original Toolkit as their source of guidance for cataloguing policy are now being directed to use the Official RDA Toolkit and the Cataloguing Hub instead. Work is ongoing in response to issues raised by the first phase of the roll out.

Next Steps

From the beginning of 2026, the British Library will resume rolling out its implementation of the Official RDA Toolkit. Besides addressing those issues referred to in the previous section, work will commence on implementing RDA for the British Library's Sound Archive. This will accompany the Sound Archive migration of its metadata from the local SAMIMARC encoding format to MARC 21 and from the SymphonyWeb cataloguing system to ALMA. More generally, the British Library will also investigate how ALMA functionality may be used to enhance and rationalise its future metadata outputs with attributes and relationships introduced by the Official RDA Toolkit. This analysis will include an examination of how metadata generated in ALMA may be exposed as linked data in RDA/RDF. In considering such opportunities, the British Library will liaise with stakeholders in the wider metadata supply chain as a means of maintaining interoperability where necessary. As a member of the European RDA Interest Group, the British Library will also offer feedback on proposals made for the further development of the Official RDA Toolkit which may require the ongoing revision of the British Library's own policy documentation. In undertaking all of these activities, the British Library aims to be better placed for the planned decommissioning of the Original Toolkit in May 2027.

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Building resource descriptions with WEMI

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses how implementations of the IFLA Library Reference Model (LRM) support the application of modern data processing tools to construct user-friendly information retrieval services for gallery, library, archive, and museum (GLAM) collections. Processing tools include Semantic Web and relational database technologies. Examples are taken from RDA: Resource Description and Access, and ISBD for Manifestation (ISBDM).

KEYWORDS WEMI; RDA

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WEMI architecture

The LRM and its predecessor Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records (FRBR) distribute the descriptive aspects of an item in a GLAM collection between four classes or entities: Work, Expression, Manifestation, and Item (WEMI). This contrasts with the centralisation of descriptive data around the entity Resource in the consolidated International Standard Bibliographic Description (ISBD).

The main reason for this distribution is to reduce the duplication of data in the descriptions of collection resources. Such duplication is most evident in library collections, where multiple resources are "functionally" identical, very similar, or similar enough to be the focus of attention of users of catalogues and other finding aids. Minimising duplication in structured data storage systems improves the efficiency of maintenance and the flexibility of processing and presentation. This is the basis of "normalisation" of data in relational databases, first proposed in 1970; the process of "FRBRisation" in library metadata (descriptive data) began in 1998.

Broadly speaking, Work and Expression store metadata for the content of a resource, and Manifestation and Item cover the carrier aspects of the resource.

The four WEMI entities are modular building blocks that can be put together to form a variety of structures that can describe different kinds of resource in a consistent and interoperable manner. These structures can then be clad in various ways to form user-friendly facades; behind the artistry of display is a construction technology. The result is WEMI architecture.

WEMI structures

Basic stack

The relationships between WEMI descriptions of a single resource ensure the integrity of the description as a whole and allow it to be re-assembled accurately from the distributed metadata. These relationships are distinct from other relationships between WEMI entities that describe different resources, and are sometimes referred to as "primary relationships". The description of a single resource, and the WEMI structure that stores it, is known as a "WEMI stack".

The number (or "cardinality") of WEMI descriptions linked by primary relationships in a stack is constrained to reflect the characteristics of a resource and the processes that create them. For example, a manifestation may have primary relationships with more than one item, but an item can have only one primary relationship with a manifestation; this covers the creation of multiple identical items via an industrial process such as printing and the creation of a single item via an artisanal process such as painting.

The constraints can be expressed with standard keyboard symbols as:

$$W < E \times M < I$$

"<" means "one to many", and "x" means "many to many". The stack can be flipped to:

$$I > M \times E > W$$

">" means "many to one". Flipping the stack better resembles the point of view of the cataloguer, who usually begins the description with an "item in hand".

This general stack model is the basis of specific architectures for the different combinations of WEMI that are needed to describe the range of resources to be found in GLAM collections. The differentiation of such architectures arises from the specification of additional cardinality constraints, for example by reducing "one to many" and "many to one" to "one to one"

Simple stack

Refining all integrity constraints to "one to one" gives the simple flipped stack

I – M – E – W

"– " means "one to one".

This models a resource that is a unique item that carries a single expression: the I > M constraint is refined to I – M, and the M x E constraint is refined to M – I. The basic stack implies that there can only be one manifestation and only one work in this stack. Typical examples of resources that are described with a simple stack are manuscripts containing a single letter, poem, musical composition, etc., an art painting or drawing, etc.

Figure 1 shows the basic and simple stacks as entity-relationship diagrams. The relationships represented by the arrows are the LRM and RDA primary relationships; the direction of the arrow indicates the direction of the relationship, which has been inverted or flipped to go from Item to Work.
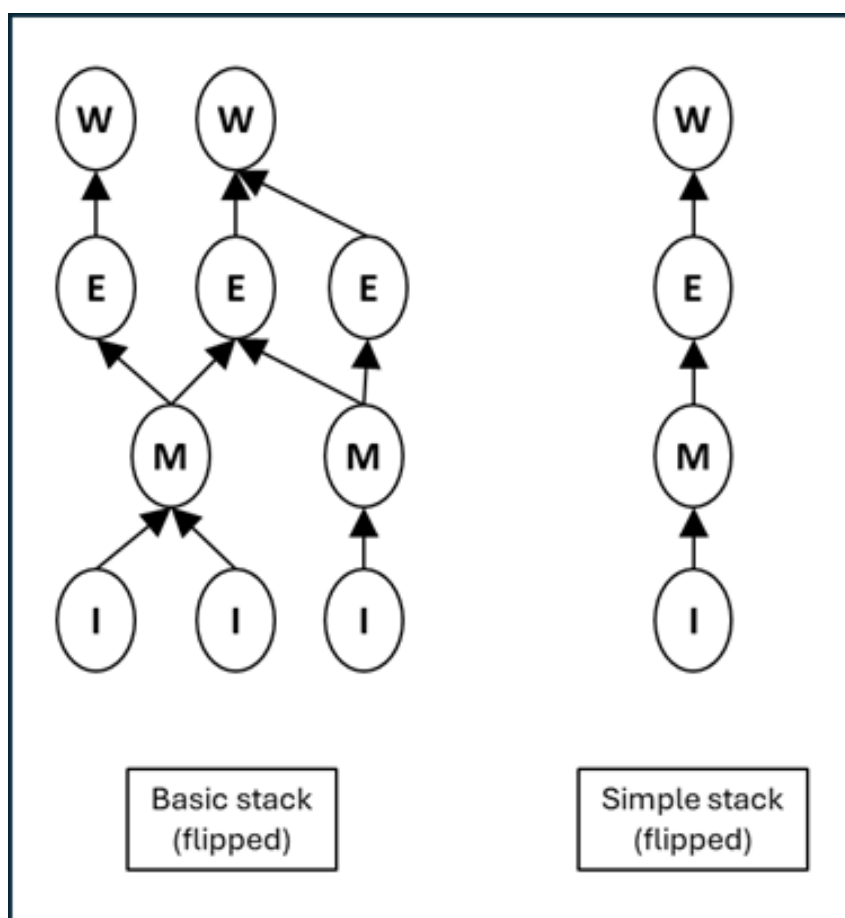
Figure 1: Basic and simple WEMI stacks

Aggregate stack

The basic architecture of an aggregate applies when one manifestation embodies more than one expression: the M x E constraint is refined to M < E. The aggregate stack is

$$I > M < E > W$$

Each embodied expression realises a single work, and the manifestation may be exemplified by one or more items.

There are three kinds of aggregate stack that are distinguished by the relationships between the embodied expressions:

- An augmentation aggregate embodies an expression of a dominant work and one or more expressions of works that augment the dominant work.
- A collection aggregate embodies expressions of works of equal dominance.
- A parallel aggregate embodies expressions of a single work.

Examples of resources that are best described with an aggregate stack include printed texts with introductions or indexes (an augmentation aggregate), sets of online images (a collection aggregate), music albums (a collection aggregate), official publications in "parallel" languages (a parallel aggregate), etc.

The description of some resources requires a mix of kinds of aggregate stack; for example, a printed set of poems with an introduction is a collection aggregate and an augmentation aggregate. This makes no difference to the architecture of the aggregate stack, which depends on the number of expressions rather than their dominance or utility in resource description.

Collection aggregate stack

The selection and sequencing of expressions in an aggregate manifestation is described by an aggregating expression and its work that is also embodied in the manifestation. In fact, there is generally no need to describe this aggregating expression because it does not inherit the characteristics of the aggregated expressions. However, there is sometimes a need to describe its aggregating work because it is the plan for selection, sequencing, etc. This is often the case with collection aggregates: the aggregating work describes the coverage and scope, context, etc. of the set of aggregated expressions. If the number of aggregated expressions is too large to warrant separate descriptions for them and their works, the aggregating work becomes the main description of the resource's content. RDA accommodates this with a shortcut primary relationship between Manifestation and Work which does not need to describe the intermediate expression. Furthermore, an aggregating work is realised in only one aggregating expression, so this does not

conflict with the basic WEMI stack. The stack for a resource that is a collection aggregate with too many aggregated expressions to describe separately is

$$I > M – [E] – W$$

The brackets indicate that the entity is not described. This stack simplifies the description of a resource that includes a large set of independent expressions and works. Examples of such resources are a printed anthology of short stories, poems, etc., a "field" or "vox populi" recording of performances or opinions, an online collection of photographs, etc.
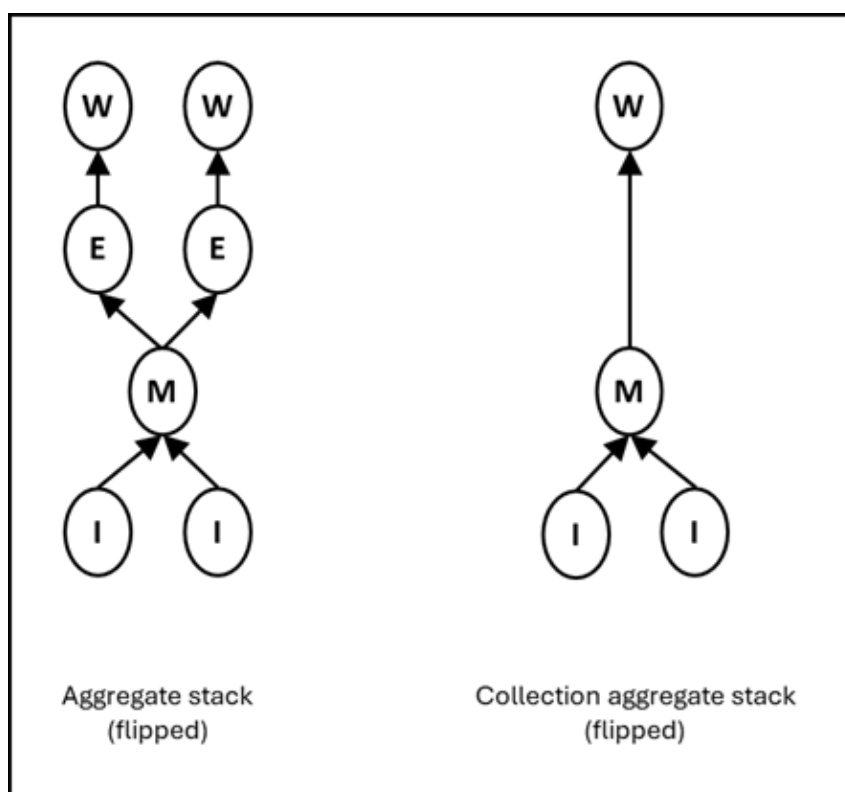
Figure 2: Aggregate stacks

Singleton stack

A resource that is unique has only one item. This exemplifies what the LRM calls a "singleton manifestation". The simple stack discussed above is an example, but the general model of a singleton resource refines only I > M to I – M in the basic stack

$$I – M \text{ x } E > W$$

Examples of resources that are described with a singleton stack are a sheet carrying multiple manuscript drawings, and the Wu Tang Clan album "Once upon a time in Shaolin".

Diachronic stack

A resource which is planned to be instantiated over time is a "diachronic" resource. It is initially instantiated and then its content is amended by deletion, updating, or addition. This may be accompanied by corresponding changes in its carrier. However, some changes in carrier are treated as work boundaries; for example a change in carrier type indicates the need for a description of a new diachronic resource. A diachronic work is a plan for the change of content, but unlike a plan for aggregation, it extends into an unpredictable future. The naturally changing values of extent or other physical characteristics of a diachronic manifestation can be recorded with data provenance (timespan of validity, etc.), but a change of carrier type engenders new values for elements that are specific to the type. These practical considerations complement the WEM-lock for describing diachronic works: there is a one-to-one refinement of the primary relationship constraints between Work, Expression, and Manifestation

$$W - E - M < I$$

Furthermore, the "planning" characteristics of the expression can be recorded for the work using representative expression elements because there is only one expression. This means that changes in description need to be recorded only for the resource work and manifestation

$$[I] > M* - [E] - W*$$

The asterisk indicates that the description of this entity (aspect) is expected to change over time. If the change in plan is significant, a new resource description is required. Note that any requirement to record an item description is likely to be for administrative purposes outside of the scope of RDA. The diachronic stack can describe resources such as a printed serial, a video diary, a publisher series, an updating service, etc. This applies to the resource as a whole; issues and snapshots of iterations are described as distinct resources related to the diachronic resource.

WEMI facades

The user-friendly presentation of RDA and ISBDM metadata is determined by the use of an application profile which selects the elements to display and the kinds of data value that may be processed before display.

There are minimal restrictions on the selection of elements. RDA requires a human-readable label for each entity, at least one recorded in any appellation element (name/title, access point, identifier). For a nomen, the nomen string meets the same purpose. This provides great flexibility in how simple or ornate a façade can be attached to a WEMI stack.
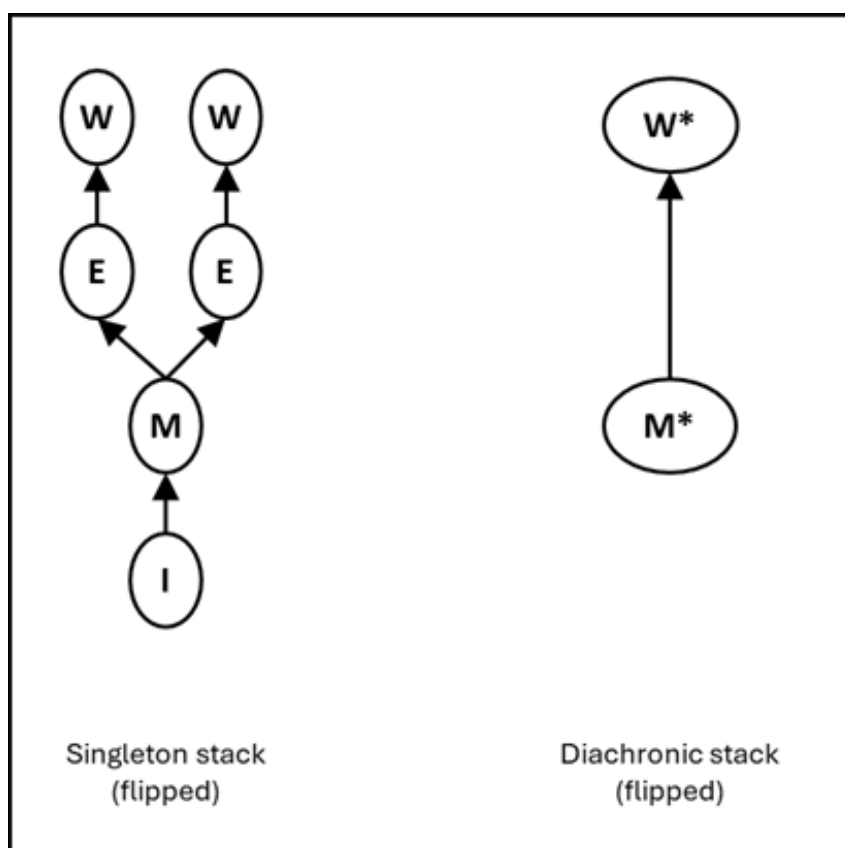
Figure 3: Singleton and diachronic stacks

The four recording methods in RDA Toolkit accommodate the kinds of data value that are appropriate for resource description. These are associated with data processing techniques: an unstructured description can be displayed in a block or processed for general keyword extraction; a structured description can be used in a browse function, as a heading, or processed for controlled term extraction; an identifier can be used in direct search; an IRI can be used in linked open data presentation. This provides great flexibility in how simple or ornate a surface can be applied to a façade.

An application profile may also determine how mandatory a selected element is, and how repeatable, and other aspects such as language or script of data values. These are akin to town-planning regulations that ensure overall architectural freedom does not confuse or displease the user. An application profile can be embedded in the Toolkit as a set of policy statements, or as a local document or service linked to specified RDA elements and instructions.

ISBD for Manifestations

ISBDM is the outcome of an ongoing project to develop ISBDs for the other LRM entities. The opportunity was taken to provide elements, stipulations, and guidance for only the Manifestation entity so that the standard can be used stand-alone. It provides much of the descriptive coverage of the consolidated ISBD, albeit it with different elements, and introduces coverage of relationships with other entities via access

points, identifiers, and IRIs. ISBDM is developed to be interoperable with RDA and other implementations of the LRM. It is more prescriptive than RDA: there are a few more mandatory Manifestation elements; controlled values must use ISBDM vocabularies; and there is a preference order for data recording methods. It is also at a broader level of granularity than RDA. These are aspects of an RDA application profile if ISBDM elements are mapped to RDA Manifestation elements – such a map is in development.

Examples

Element	Value
title proper	"Asterix and the gowden heuk"
manifestation title and responsibility statement	"Goscinny and Uderzo present ane Asterix adventure, Asterix and the gowden heuk, scrievit by René Goscinny, illustratit by Albert Uderzo, translatit by Matthew Fitt"
identifier for manifestation	"9781845028886"
extent of manifestation	"1 volume (44 pages)"
expression manifested	"Goscinny, René, 1926-1977. Serpe d'or (text; Scots)"
related entity of manifestation	http://www.wikidata.org/entity/Q7620503

Figure 4: Cut-down RDA description of a printed volume.

These examples are extracted from ISBDM examples, with ISBDM elements replaced with their RDA equivalent. The focus is on the Manifestation entity within the WEMI stack.

Figure 4 is taken from the ISBDM description of "Asterix and the gowden heuk (2014; Itchy Coo; volume)"[1]. The description is conformant with RDA: it uses RDA elements, it has two appellations (title proper and identifier), and it has a primary relationship to the embodied expression. The related entity is the IRI for the character Asterix in Wikidata.

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[1] https://www.iflastandards.info/ISBDM/docs/fullex/fx059.html

Element	Value
title proper	"Revolver"
authorized access point for manifestation	"Revolver (2022; Apple Corps Limited; audio disc; 2 CD edition)"
manifestation title and responsibility statement	"2002 stereo mixes of Revolver, Paperback writer and Rain, produced and mixed by Giles Martin ... Sessions mixed by Giles Martin"
extent of manifestation	"2 audio discs (29 performed songs in 73 min 51 sec) + 1 volume (40 pages)"
note on manifestation	"Contents: CD 1: Taxman; Eleanor Rigby; I'm only sleeping; Love you to; Here, there and everywhere; Yellow submarine; She said she said; Good day sunshire; And your bird can sing; For no one; Doctor Robert; I want to tell you; Got to get you into my life; Tomorrow never knows (all 2022 stereo mixes). CD 2: Paperback writer (2022 stereo mix); Rain (2022 stereo mix); Tomorrow never knows (take 1); Got to get you into my life (early mix); Love you to (take 7); Doctor Robert (take 7); And your bird can sing (first version take 2); Taxman (take 11); I'm only sleeping (take 2); Eleanor Rigby (take 2); For no one (take 10 backing track); Yellow submarine (take 4 before sound effects); I want to tell you (speech and take 4); Here, there and everywhere (take 6); She said she said. (take 15 backing track rehearsal)."
work manifested	"The Beatles. Revolver (2 CD edition)"

Figure 5: Basic RDA description of a music CD set.

Figure 5 is taken from the ISBDM description of "Revolver (2022; Apple Corps Limited; audio disc; 2 CD edition)"[2]. All versions of The Beatle's Revolver album are aggregates of the individual songs they contain, and many of the reissues of the album contain extra tracks. Each variation in the tracks, including alternate versions, mixes, etc. forms a new aggregating work. In this example the original tracks have been remixed to create new expressions and additional expressions of earlier mixes, takes, etc. have been added. The RDA relationship between this aggregating work and the original work (The Beatles, Revolver) is "inspired by".

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[2] https://www.iflastandards.info/ISBDM/docs/fullex/fx049.html

Element	Value
manifestation title and responsibility statement	"IFLA series on bibliographic control"
has manifestation identifier statement	"ISSN 1868-8438"
title proper	"IFLA series on bibliographic control"
authorized access point for manifestation	"IFLA series on bibliographic control (2004-2012; De Gruyter Saur; volume)"
carrier type	"volume"
note on manifestation	"First issue published in 2004 as volume 26; last issue published in 2012 as volume 45."
work manifested	"ISSN 1868-8438"

Figure 6: Minimal description of the manifestation of a series as a whole.

Figure 6 is taken from the ISBDM description of the manifestation of "IFLA series on bibliographic control (2004-2012; De Gruyter Saur; volume)"[3], a diachronic work with an ISSN. The ISSN is an identifier for the work, not the manifestation (although the WEM-lock blurs the distinction). However, the manifestations of the issues of the work (the individual volumes) bear the ISSN and this common statement is treated as a manifestation statement for the "whole" manifestation of the diachronic work. The description uses the "work manifested" shortcut primary relationship. Note that the description is open-ended; IFLA might decide to issue another volume in the future, or not. This may be recorded in a change to the existing note, or the addition of a note, or by a more sophisticated method of data provenance. In this example it would also require a change to the authorised access point because it is based on publication date; this can be avoided if a different string encoding scheme is use for diachronic manifestation access points.

References

Escolano Rodríguez, E., Caro Martín, A., Fejes, J., García-Monge Carretero, I., Gentili-Tedeschi, M., McGarry, D., Ouf, R., Santos Muñoz, R. and White H. C. (2022) *ISBD International Standard Bibliographic Description : 2021 Update to the 2011 Consolidated Edition*. International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions. Available at: https://repository.ifla.org/handle/20.500.14598/1939 [Accessed 5 December 2025]

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[3] https://www.iflastandards.info/ISBDM/docs/fullex/fx013.html

RDA Toolkit (2025-10 release) (2025) ALA Digital Reference. Available at: https://access.rdatoolkit.org/ [Accessed 5 December 2025]

Riva, P., Le Bœuf, P. and Žumer, M. (2024) *IFLA Library Reference Model: A Conceptual Model for Bibliographic Information*. International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions. Available at: https://repository.ifla.org/items/214c74cb-c075-4428-a138-39f8d06c55aa [Accessed 5 December 2025]

RDA in the UK implementation survey 2025

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ABSTRACT

This article presents the results of the RDA in the UK implementation survey 2025, which was jointly conducted by the UK Committee on RDA and the CILIP Metadata and Discovery Group.

Introduction

The following survey was conducted jointly by the UK Committee on RDA (UKCoR) and the Metadata & Discovery Group (MDG) to provide a snapshot of the current state of implementation and planning of the Resource Description and Access (RDA) standard in the UK. The timing was chosen to coincide with libraries starting to implement Official RDA in the run up to the removal of Original RDA from the RDA Toolkit, set for May 2027.

To allow for direct comparison, some of the questions included closely follow those of a similar survey published in Issue 173, December 2013 of Catalogue & Index (Danskin, 2013). New questions were included to provide wider context, assess training requirements and in anticipation of comparison needs with future surveys.

The survey was conducted using MS Office forms and announced through JISCMAIL lists (CIG-E-FORUM, LIS-RDA, ARLIS-LINK, LIS-RAREBOOKS, LIS-E-RESOURCES, and LIS-UKBIBS), LinkedIn, MDG's monthly email bulletin and word of mouth. There were 63 responses received in total between 20th October and 21st November 2025. Two responses have been discounted as one represented a non-UK institution and the other was a repetition from a single person at an institution, which brings the total valid number of responses to 61.

Overview

As before, most respondents are from the academic community, with lower responses from the public library sector. There were several museums, archives, specialist and company libraries who responded as well. Implementation of Original RDA is ubiquitous across the sample survey, but few of those are either planning to or in the process of implementing Official RDA.

As with the previous survey, interoperability remains a key asset of RDA and this time around cost effectiveness was less of a factor. Considerable reservations are felt at the need to train and develop staff to the new standard while continuing with business as usual. There are also concerns about the lack of practical application of the new standard within current library systems environments.

The results

In this section we present the data from the responses, arranged by section. There were five sections and 25 questions in all. As well as providing the numbers, visuals are included to illustrate the raw data. We have also mapped some of the data to show trends across the sector.

Section 1 – About you

This section recorded basic information about the respondents; their name, organisation and contact details.

Contrary to the 2013 survey, multiple submissions from the same institution were permitted. However, no duplicate entries were received, and this allowed for a direct comparison showing an increase of 32% in the response rate to the 2025 survey.

It was encouraging to see just how many respondents indicated they were willing to be part of the conversation going forward, by responding in the affirmative to being contacted post-survey. This will allow UKCoR to engage more widely with the sector and early adopters, as well as to follow up on individual comments.

Section 2 – Your organisation

This section recorded information about sector, region and staffing resources. Question 5 allowed us to directly compare with the corresponding question of the 2013 survey. Questions 6 and 7 were newly added to provide an overview of resource allocation by region and sector.

Question 5: Which of the following best describes your organisation?

The results broadly mirror those of the 2013 survey in that, the majority of responses (58.7%) came from academic/research libraries; all three national libraries responded; and from some types (school, archive, information unit) there were no responses. It is of note that no repository responded, although RDA is supposed to be beneficial for describing digital collections. Perhaps that's a reflection on where the metadata for these resources comes from – namely academics. It was also noted by one of the respondents that e-resource metadata is mostly driven by supply chains and is lost in Discovery layers anyway.

Type of Library	Number of responses
Academic library	35
Museum or Gallery	7
Specialist library	7
National Library	3
Company Library	3
Public Library	3
Health Library	2
Bibliographic service	1
Independent consultant	1

Table 1: Normalised distribution of responses across library types
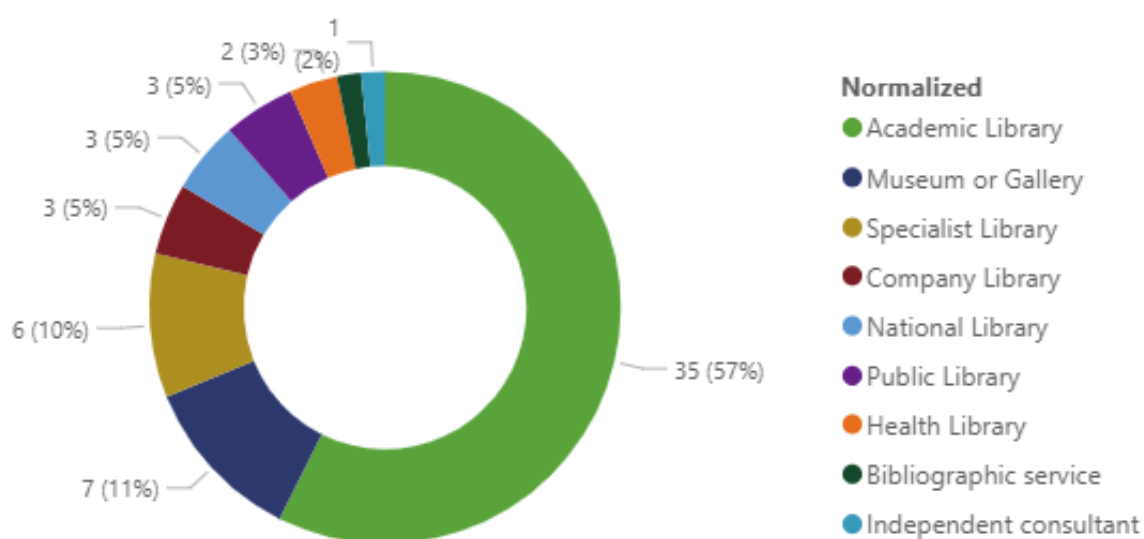
Figure 1: Normalised distribution of responses across library types

We realised, from the 12 responses under 'Other', that we had inadvertently omitted to add 'Public library' and 'Specialist library' as options. Those 12 responses have been normalised where possible. For example, added to the 'Specialist library' type were the three responses from Cathedral libraries, one from a Conservatoire library, and one from a law library. The two responses from research/charitable libraries with a medical focus have been added to the 'Health library' type. It should be noted however that there were no responses from NHS libraries.

Which of the following best describes your organisation

Library type	Number
Academic library	35
Museum or Gallery	7
Company library	3
National library	3
Bibliographic service	1
Cathedral	1
Cathedral Library	1
conservatoire	1
Independent consultant	1
Library of a membership ...	1
Local council special colle...	1
Public library	1
Public reference library	1
rare books and special col...	1
Special legal library with n...	1
Special library	1
Specialist library	1

Figure 2: Distribution of responses across library types before normalisation

Question 6: In which region is your organisation based?

This question was introduced to help ascertain the strength of implementation by area and/or training needs, whether implementation and/or awareness is stronger in areas where collaborations already exist and whether local training is likely to be well attended.

A third of respondents were from the London region, with a spread across other English regions, Wales and Scotland. One institution has two regional locations London and Yorkshire and Humber but only the latter is counted in this data. The only region from which there was no response was Northern Ireland. As academic libraries make up the bulk of respondents it is unsurprising that they were also the libraries best represented in the regions. However, all the other institutions together are still reasonably representative of the regions and nations together, but with a greater bias towards London. Below we show 3 views of the regional split. Firstly, we show the raw regional split (Table 2 and Figure 3). Then we show two views of the regional split by Academic Library (Figure 4) and by all the other types (Figure 5). Again, we find that the regional splits are representative across these both groups, but our specialist and museum libraries skew to London.

In which region is your organisation based?

Legend — In which UK region is your organi...
- London
- South East
- Wales
- Scotland
- South West
- West Midlands
- Yorkshire and the Humber
- East of England
- East Midlands
- North East
- North West

Values shown: 20 (33%), 7 (11%), 7 (11%), 6 (10%), 5 (8%), 5 (8%), 4 (7%), 3 (5%), 2 (3%), 1 (2%)
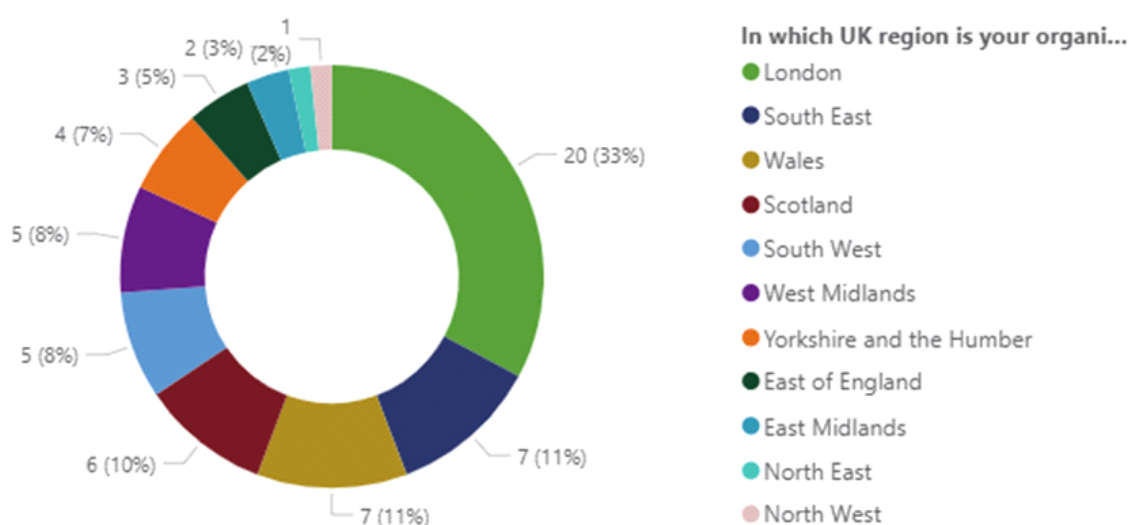
Figure 3: Regional split of responses visualisation

In which UK region is your organisation based?	Number
London	20
South East	7
Wales	7
Scotland	6
South West	5
West Midlands	5
Yorkshire and the Humber	4
East of England	3
East Midlands	2
North West	2
North East	1

Table 2: Regional split of responses

Type of Library (Academic Libraries Highlighted)

Normalized
- Academic Library
- Museum or Gallery
- Specialist Library
- Company Library
- National Library
- Public Library
- Health Library
- Bibliographic service
- Independent consultant

In which region is your organisation based?

In which UK region is your organi...
- London
- South East
- Wales
- Scotland
- South West
- West Midlands
- Yorkshire and the Humber
- East of England
- East Midlands
- North East
- North West
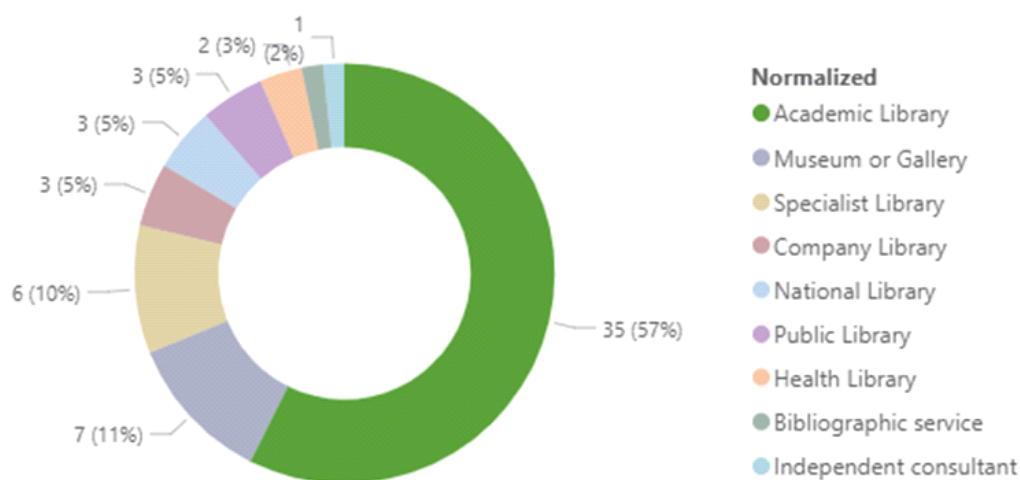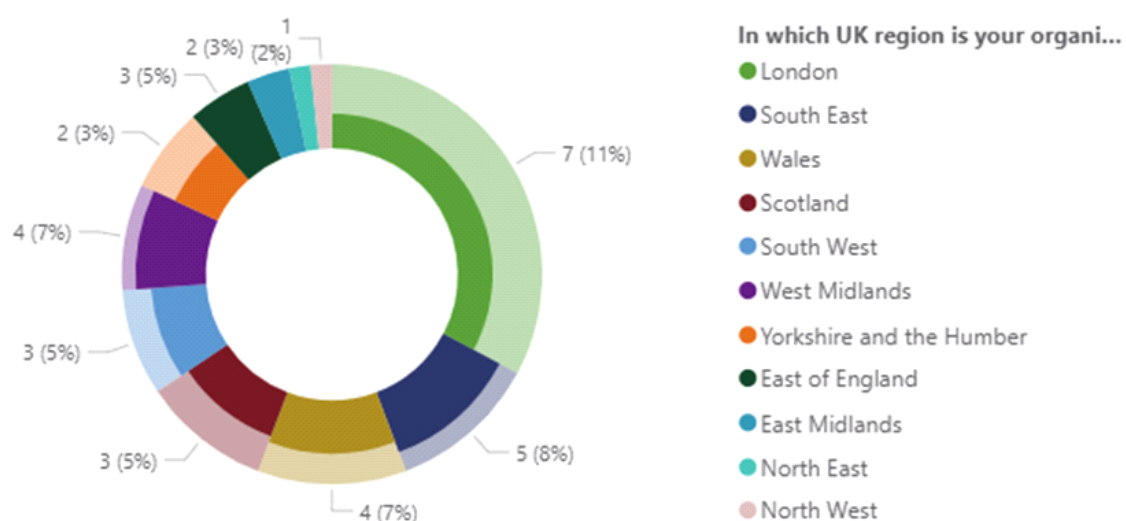
Figure 4: Regional split of responses from academic libraries

Type of Library (All other Libraries Highlighted)

Normalized
- Academic Library
- Museum or Gallery
- Specialist Library
- Company Library
- National Library
- Public Library
- Health Library
- Bibliographic service
- Independent consultant

In which region is your organisation based?

In which UK region is your organi...
- London
- South East
- Wales
- Scotland
- South West
- West Midlands
- Yorkshire and the Humber
- East of England
- East Midlands
- North East
- North West
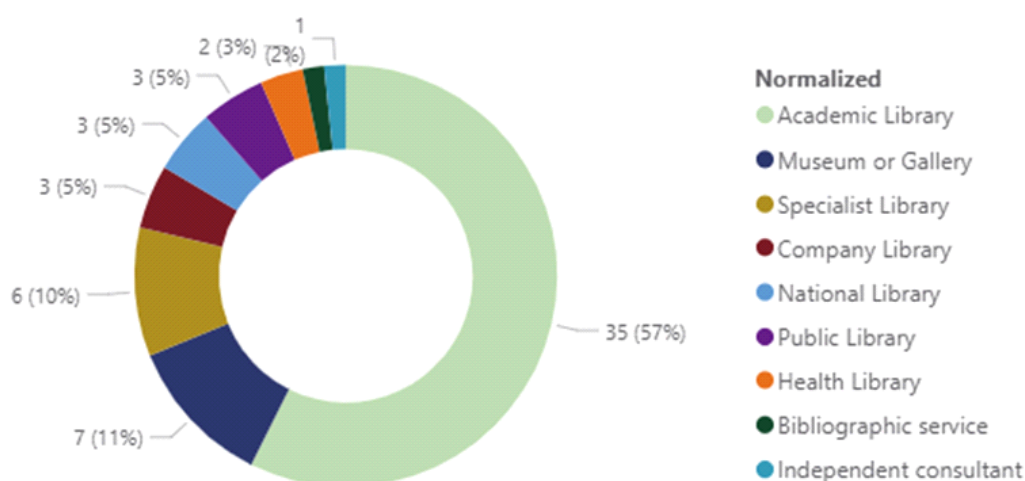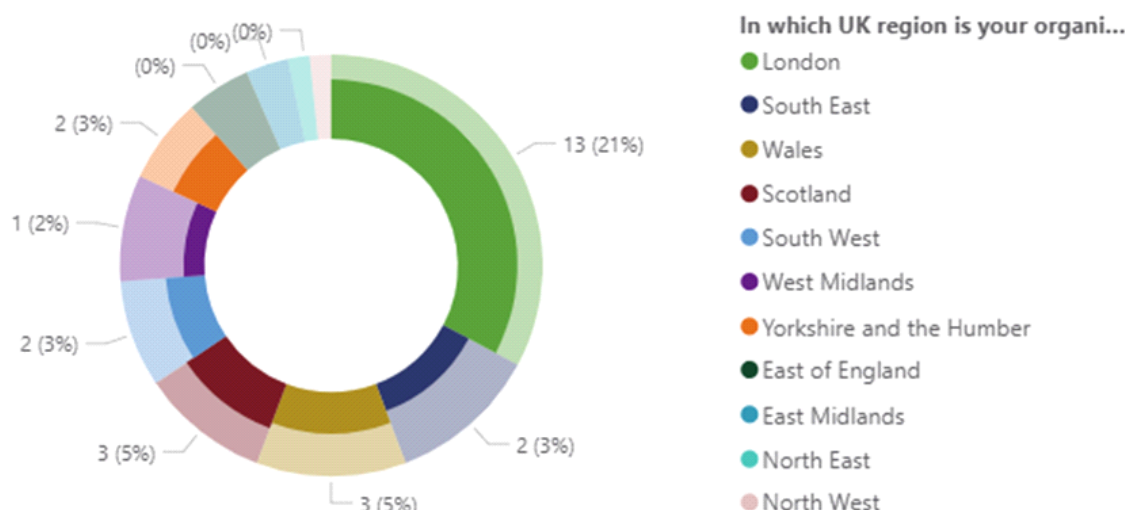
Figure 5: Regional split of responses from non-academic libraries

Question 7: How many cataloguers in your organisation? This includes anyone involved in cataloguing, regardless of whether it is a main element of their role.

This question was introduced to get an indication of the number of cataloguers employed and as a guide to help us determine likely training needs by organisation type. If it is retained in subsequent surveys a direct comparison can be made over time of the number of cataloguers within the sector.

No respondents selected the option for zero cataloguers, so we cannot see if libraries without cataloguers are engaged with RDA. The majority of institutions (74.2%) employ between 1-5 cataloguers. The national libraries, bibliographic service and a small number of academic libraries command more than 11 staff. It would be

interesting to know whether that figure is simply commensurate with the size of collections requiring metadata creation/management.

One thing that becomes clear by analysing the data in conjunction with other questions in the survey is that even comparatively well-resourced institutions are not very engaged with RDA. These institutions above all should have a strategic interest in the development of RDA but still report in large numbers that they cannot resource it or are not engaged with the process.

How many cataloguers in your organisation?	Number
1-5	45
6-10	7
11 or more	9

Table 3: Number of cataloguers in organisation

Figure 6: Number of cataloguers in organisation visualisation

How many cataloguers?	Number	Type of library
11 or more	5	Academic Library
11 or more	1	Bibliographic Services
11 or more	3	National Library
6-10	6	Academic Library
6-10	1	Museum or Gallery
1-5	24	Academic Library
1-5	3	Company Library
1-5	2	Health Library
1-5	1	Independent consultant
1-5	6	Museum or Gallery
1-5	3	Public Library
1-5	6	Specialist Library

Table 4: Number of cataloguers by type of library
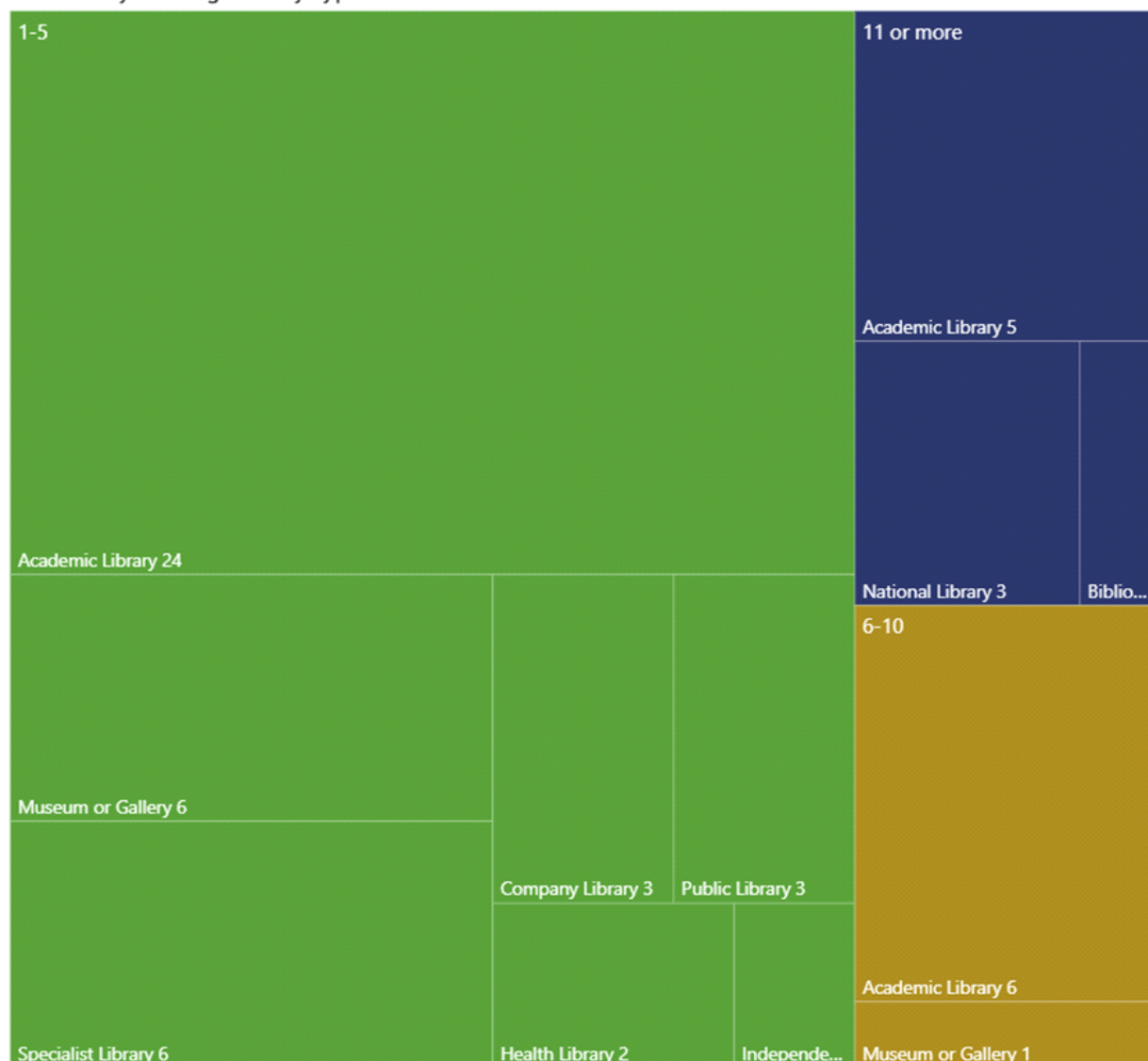
Figure 7: Number of cataloguers by type of library visualisation

Section 3 – Your cataloguing practices

This section consisted of four questions, the purpose of which was to allow us to analyse how much of the workforce is engaged in copy or original cataloguing (Question 8), whether imported metadata is to Official RDA standard (Question 9), identify UK libraries capable of implementing RDA within a linked data or relational/ object oriented scenario, and record the diversity of encoding standards in use. All questions in this section were newly introduced and so there is no direct comparison with the data from the 2013 survey.

Question 8: Do you do copy cataloguing, original cataloguing or both?

There's still very much a need for cataloguers to be trained in the latest standards, even if the majority are now mostly copy cataloguing. Interestingly, of the institutions with 11 or more staff members most (67%) are copy cataloguing with some original cataloguing and the rest (33%) are doing original cataloguing with some copy cataloguing. None of these institutions was exclusively original cataloguing. It was primarily the specialist, museum and archive institutions (13 in total, Figures 10.1 and 10.2) that were exclusively original cataloguing. Of those, six have implemented Original RDA and the rest have not implemented either version of RDA. The latter may be attributable to the fact that these institutions predominately have small cataloguing teams.

Do you do copy cataloguing, original cataloguing or both?	Number
Mostly copy cataloguing, with some original cataloguing	38
Mostly original cataloguing, with some copy cataloguing	15
All original cataloguing	8
All copy cataloguing	0

Table 5: Distribution of copy and original cataloguing
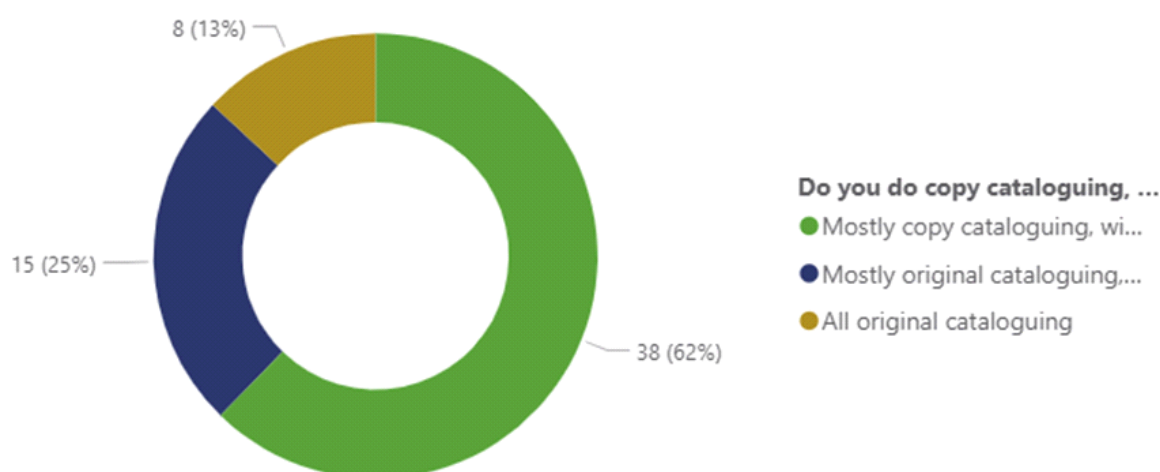
Figure 8: Distribution of copy and original cataloguing visualisation

Question 9: If your records are acquired from external providers, do they provide records to Official RDA standard?

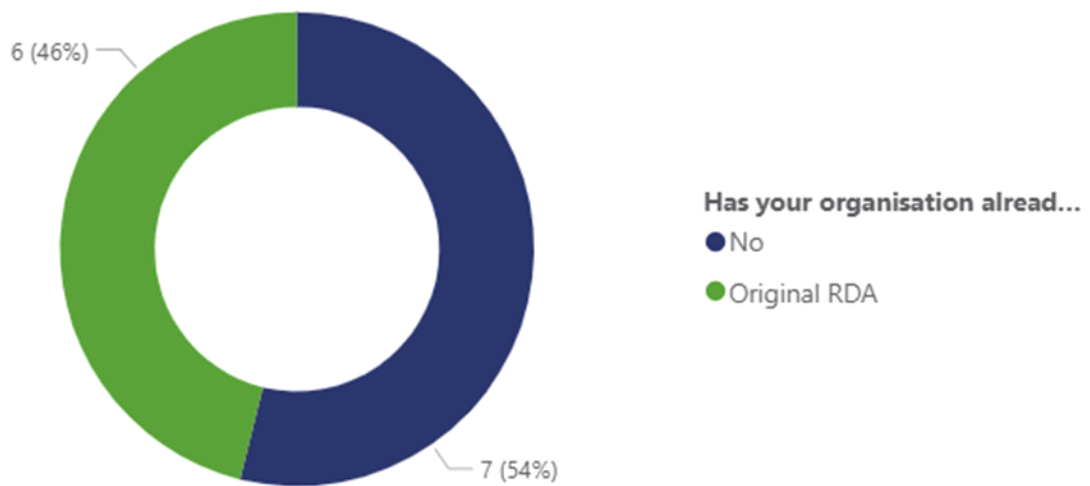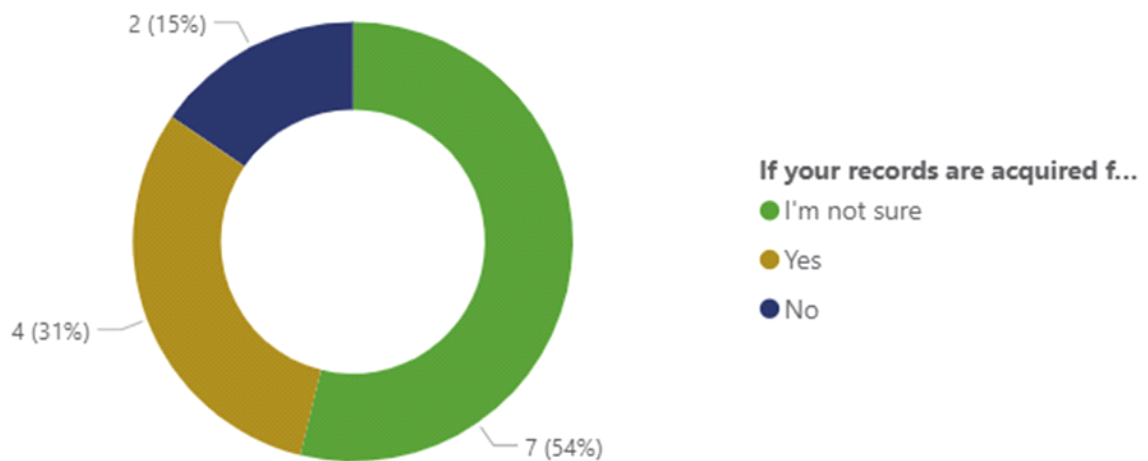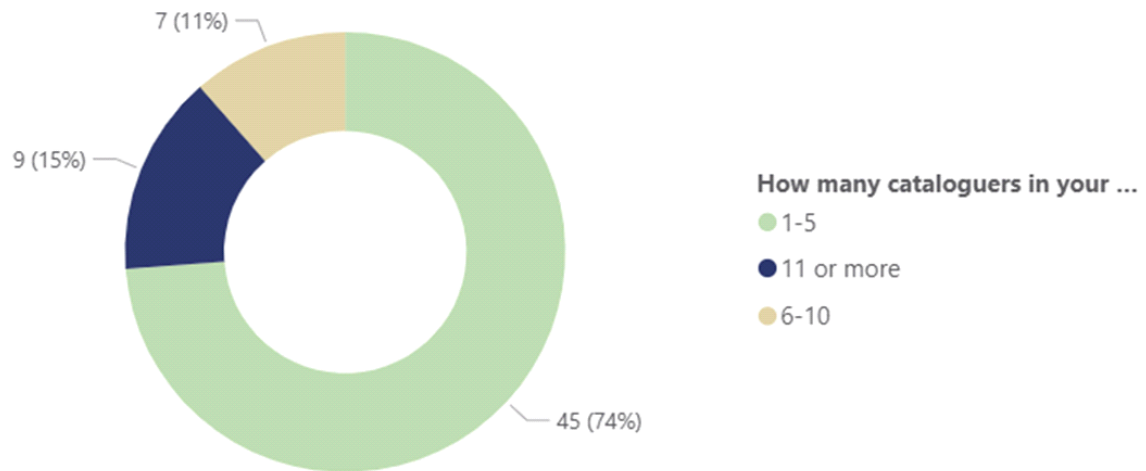Only 28.5% of respondents know that their external records are being catalogued to Official RDA standard. In hindsight, a question allowing respondents to record the record supplier(s) they use would have been useful to identify the more progressive suppliers and allowed us to confirm the accuracy of the statements. That most libraries feel they are not getting Official RDA or unable to comment suggests a sluggish uptake of the new standard across the supply chain. Interesting to note, one National Library was not receiving Official RDA records while the other two were.

If your records are acquired from external providers, do they provide records to Official RDA standard?	Number
I'm not sure	21
No	22
Yes	18

Table 6: RDA adoption in external provider records
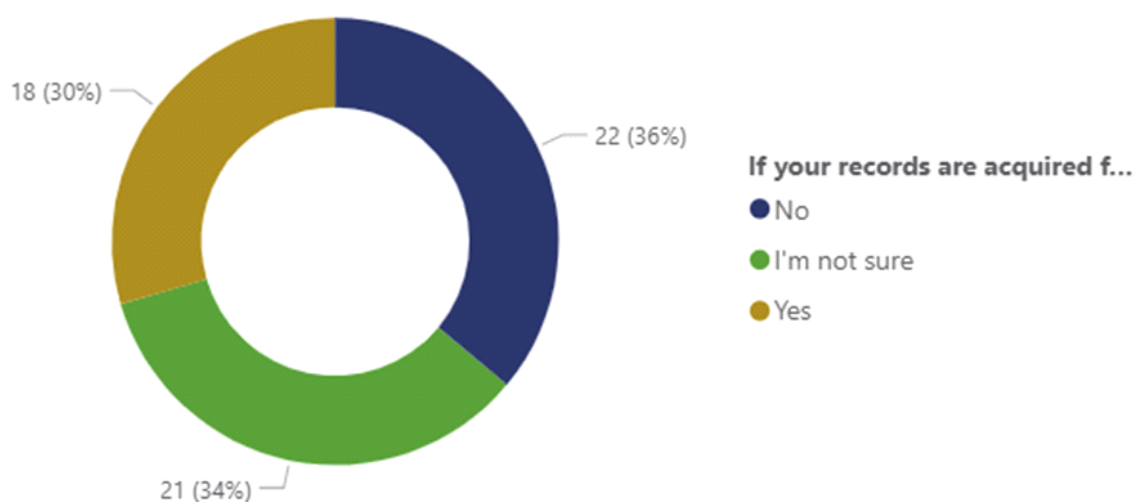
Figure 9: RDA adoption in external provider records visualisation

The following visuals filter out all but the specialist and museum libraries. It shows most of these libraries have 1-5 cataloguer(s), doing mostly original cataloguing. Just about a third of these libraries take Official RDA records from external vendors, while over half do not use RDA.

How many cataloguers in your organisation?
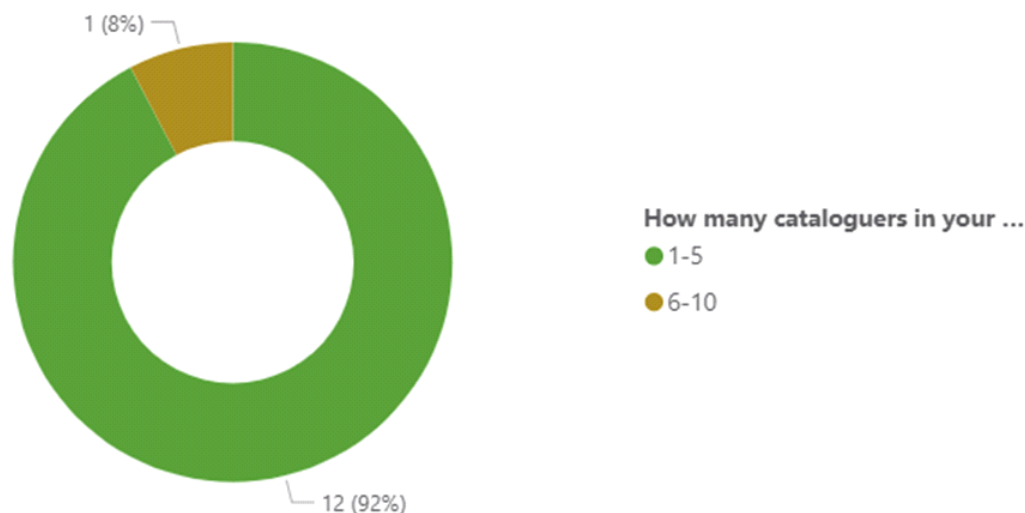
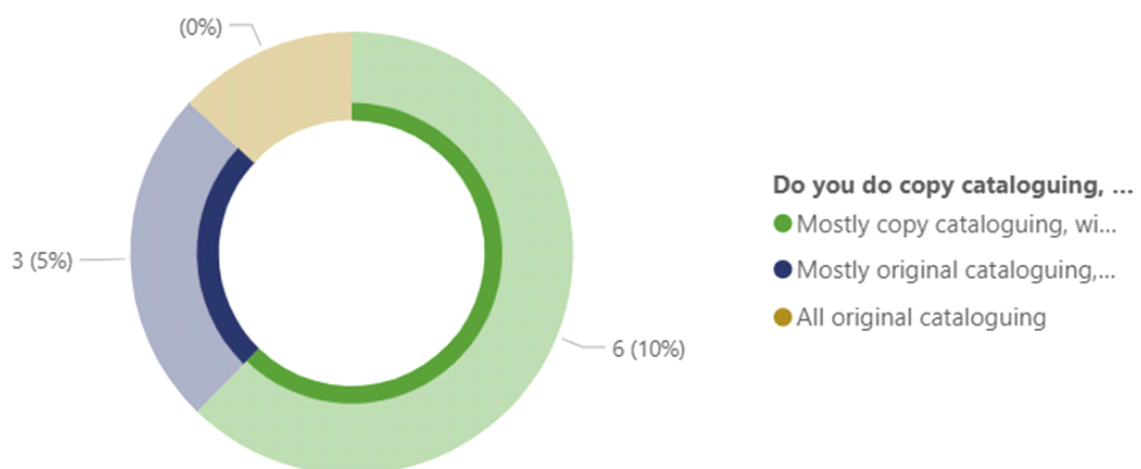

Do you do copy cataloguing, original cataloguing or both?
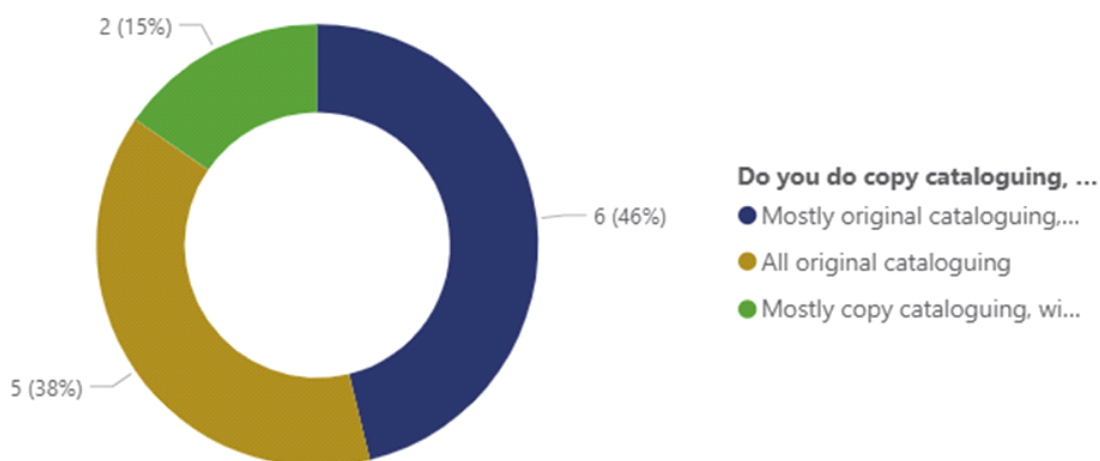
Figure 10.1: Number of cataloguers and distribution of copy and original cataloguing in specialist and museum libraries

If your records are acquired from external providers, do they provide records to Official RDA standard?

2 (15%)

4 (31%)

7 (54%)

If your records are acquired f...
- I'm not sure
- Yes
- No

6 (46%)

7 (54%)

Has your organisation alread...
- No
- Original RDA

Figure 10.2: Standard of external provider records and adoption of Original RDA in specialist and museum libraries

In contrast for the organisations with the most cataloguers only 3 are doing mostly original cataloguing while the other 6 are doing mostly copy cataloguing.

How many cataloguers in your organisation?

7 (11%)

9 (15%)

How many cataloguers in your ...
● 1-5
● 11 or more
● 6-10

45 (74%)

Do you do copy cataloguing, original cataloguing or both?

(0%)

3 (5%)

Do you do copy cataloguing, ...
● Mostly copy cataloguing, wi...
● Mostly original cataloguing,...
● All original cataloguing

6 (10%)

Figure 11: Distribution of copy and original cataloguing in organisation with the most cataloguers.

Question 10: Which of the following implementation scenarios best suits your data structure?

The vast majority of users will want to implement Official RDA via traditional ILS roots, and this is the case across the sectors as well. In terms of libraries using more than one option it is academic libraries and a national library that are interested in something outside of the ILS model.

This reinforces the message that until there is a wider call for a linked data application to be offered by vendors libraries are unlikely to see the benefit of moving to, and therefore the need to implement, Official RDA.

Which of the following implementation scenarios best suits your database structure?	Number
Bibliographic/Authority data (i.e. standard ILS)	46
I'm not sure	8
More than one of the above	6
Flat file data (i.e. data about a resource that is recorded in a single record)	1

Table 7: RDA implementation scenarios

Which of the following implementation scenarios best suits your database structure?
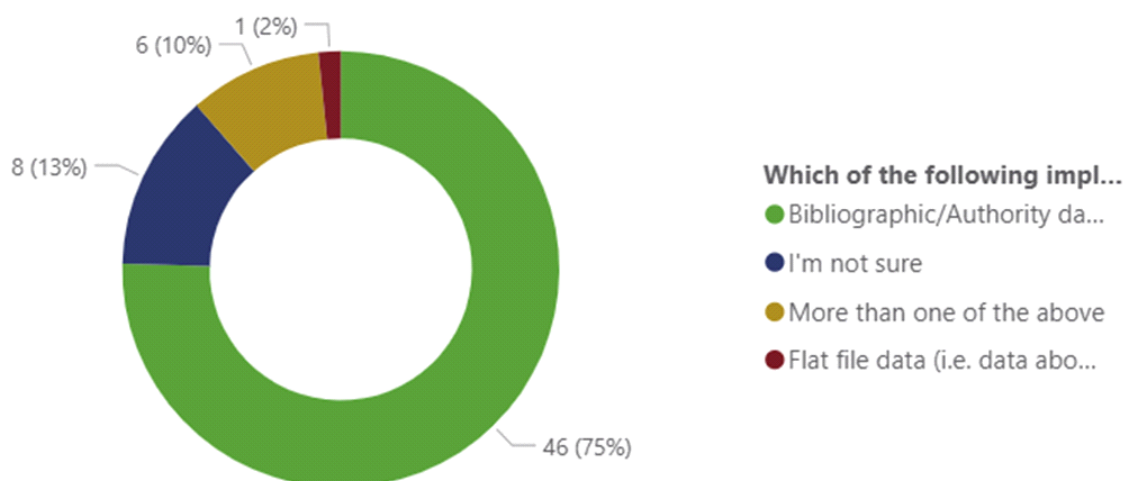
Figure 12: RDA implementation scenarios visualisation

Question 11: Which encoding standard do you catalogue to? (Select all that apply)

This data shows how many of the encoding standards are used by the responding institutions, with most only using one. There are a small number of institutions using more than one encoding scheme. The predominate scheme in use is MARC21. While it is important that RDA works with MARC21, other schemes may be used. It'll become more important to do so if library data is to be lifted out of current data silos. Some libraries stated they are adopting BIBFRAME and others are using their own scheme.

The available choices in the survey were: MARC21, UNIMARC, BIBFRAME, METS, TEI and EAD. The table below incorporates responses from the comments entered under the option for 'Other'.

Which encoding standard do you catalogue to? (Please select all that apply)	Number
MARC 21	57
Dublin Core	5
EAD (Encoded Archival Description)	5
TEI (Text Encoding Initiative)	2
BIBFRAME	1
In house LRM based, with a view to being mappable to all formats	1
LMS is web-based platform that doesn't facilitate particular encoding	1
METS (Metadata Encoding and Transmission Standard)	1
Own	1
Spectrum for museum collections	1
Unencoded/local standard (in Soutron ILS)	1
XML	1

Table 8: Encoding standards used
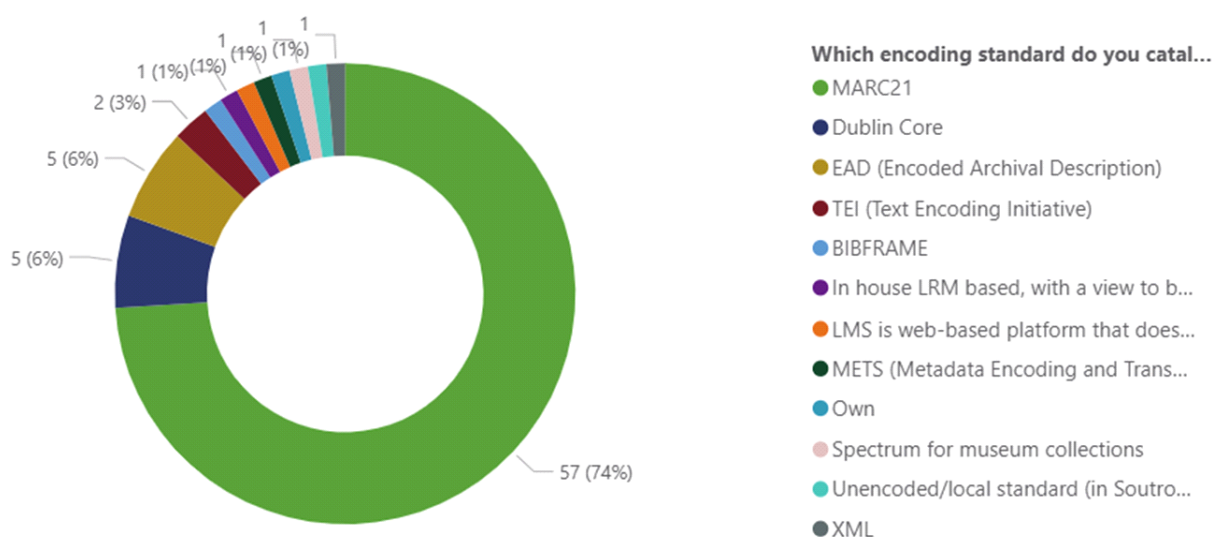
Figure 13: Encoding standards used visualisation

Section 4 – Official RDA implementation

This was the largest section of the survey, with a total of 10 questions focused on implementation. Several of the questions mirrored those of the 2013 survey, adjusted to reflect implementation of Official RDA. Where necessary some of the questions were adjusted to collect data on both Original and Official RDA implementation.

There were new questions added to assess use of the RDA Toolkit, RDA Registry and the stages of implementation completed by those who are implementing Official RDA.

Question 12: Has your organisation already implemented Original RDA or Official RDA?

The overwhelming majority of institutions are yet to move to Official RDA; less than 10% of respondents have done so. Most institutions who responded, have implemented Original RDA. Just under a third of respondents have either not implemented the standard or are unsure if they have. The uncertainty may come from lack of clarity in the distinction between the RDA cataloguing standard and its application in an encoding scheme. It may also be down to cataloguing practices that have remained static since AACR2 days.

Has your organisation already implemented Original or Official RDA?	Number
Original RDA	40
No	13
Official RDA	5
I'm not sure	3

Table 9: RDA implementation
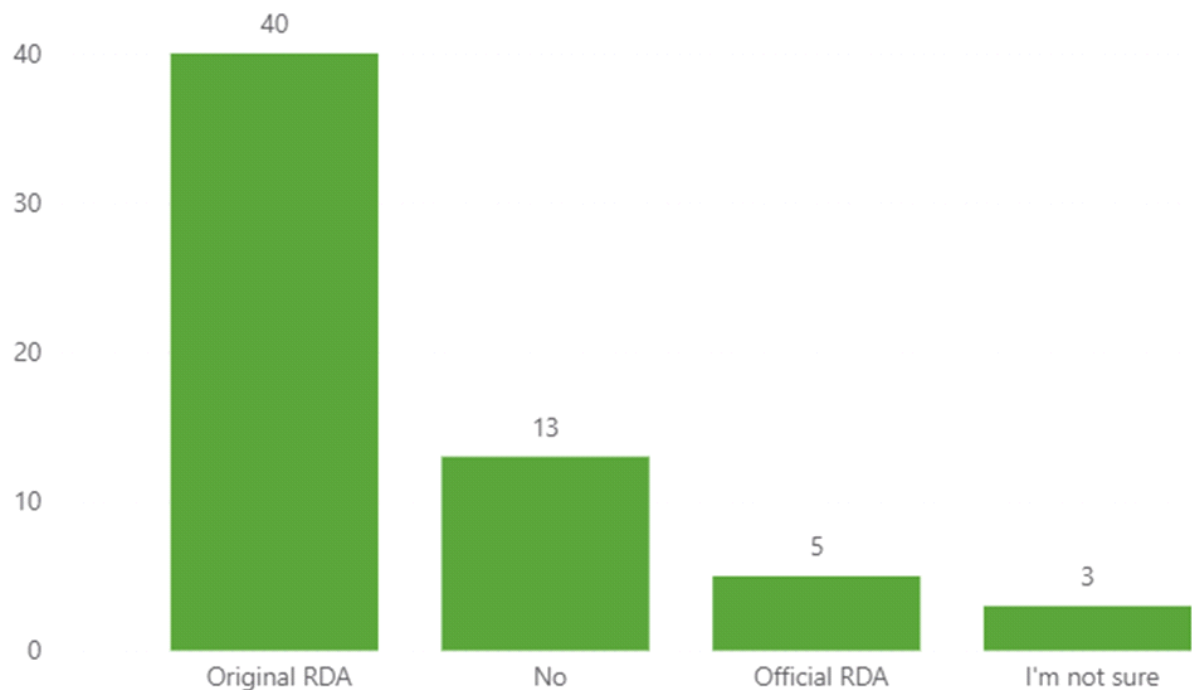
Figure 14: RDA implementation visualisation

Of the academic institutions who responded to the survey, 25 have adopted Original RDA, five have adopted Official RDA, four have not adopted any form of RDA and two are unsure of their RDA status.
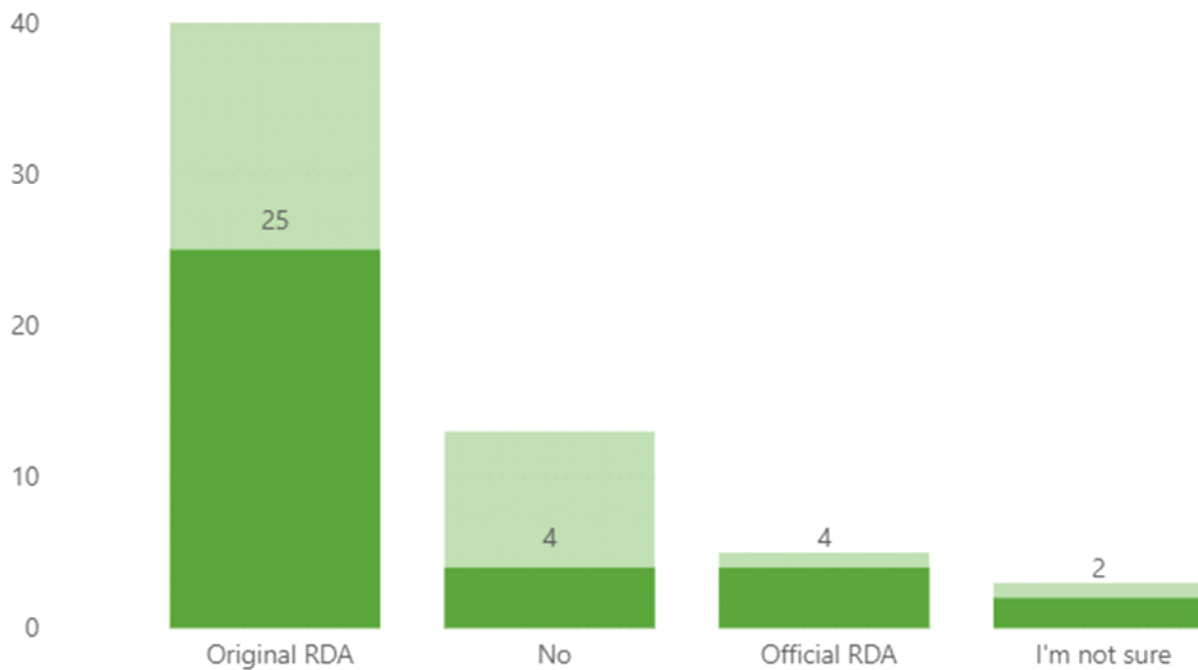

Figure 15: RDA implementation in academic libraries

Question 13: Has your organisation taken a decision to implement Official RDA in the future?

Despite the widespread adoption of the Original RDA standard most institutions currently have no plans to implement Official RDA. In fact, there is a marked difference in attitude between now and 2013. Whereas currently the majority (61%) are undecided, in 2013 the majority were planning to implement within 18 months.

Of those who have implemented Original RDA, nine will implement Official RDA but with no date, five will implement it within the next 18 months and the rest remain undecided (Figure 17). Of those who have yet to adopt Original RDA or are not sure (16 organisations), most have no plans to adopt Official RDA, one will adopt in the next 18 months and three will not adopt the standard at all (Figure 18).

Has your organisation taken a decision to implement Official RDA in future?	Number
No, we have not yet decided.	38
Yes, but we have not set a date for implementation.	11
Yes, we plan to implement within the next 18 months.	9
We have decided not to implement Official RDA.	3

Table 10: Official RDA implementation plans
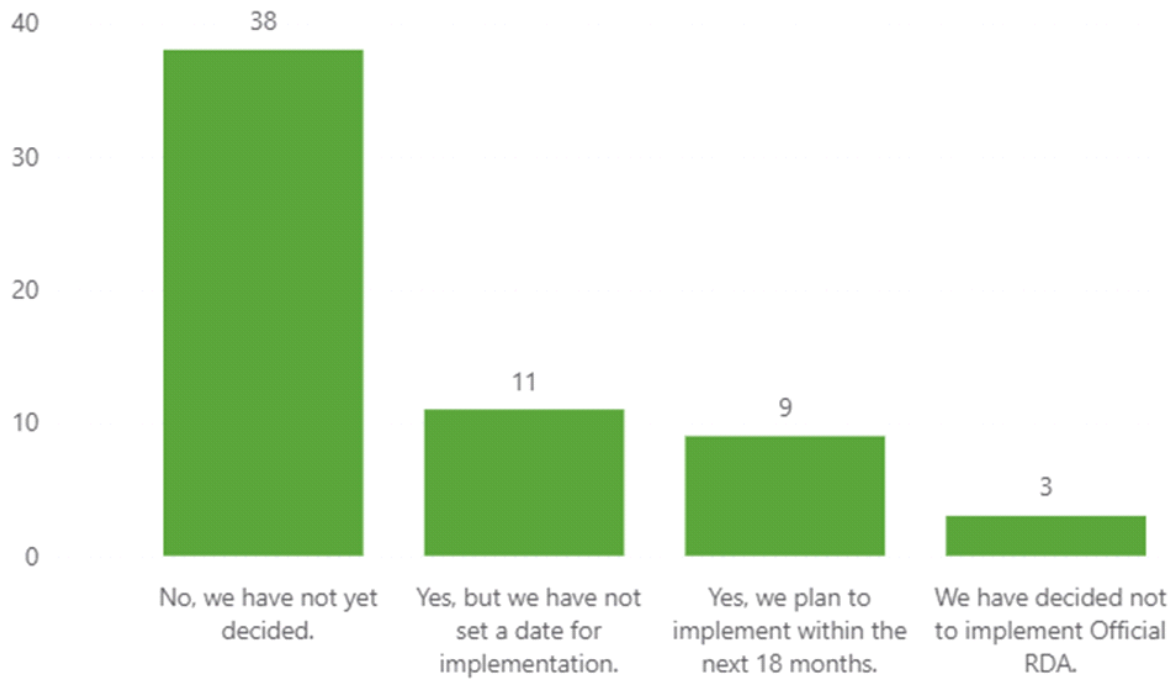
Figure 16: Official RDA implementation plans visualisation
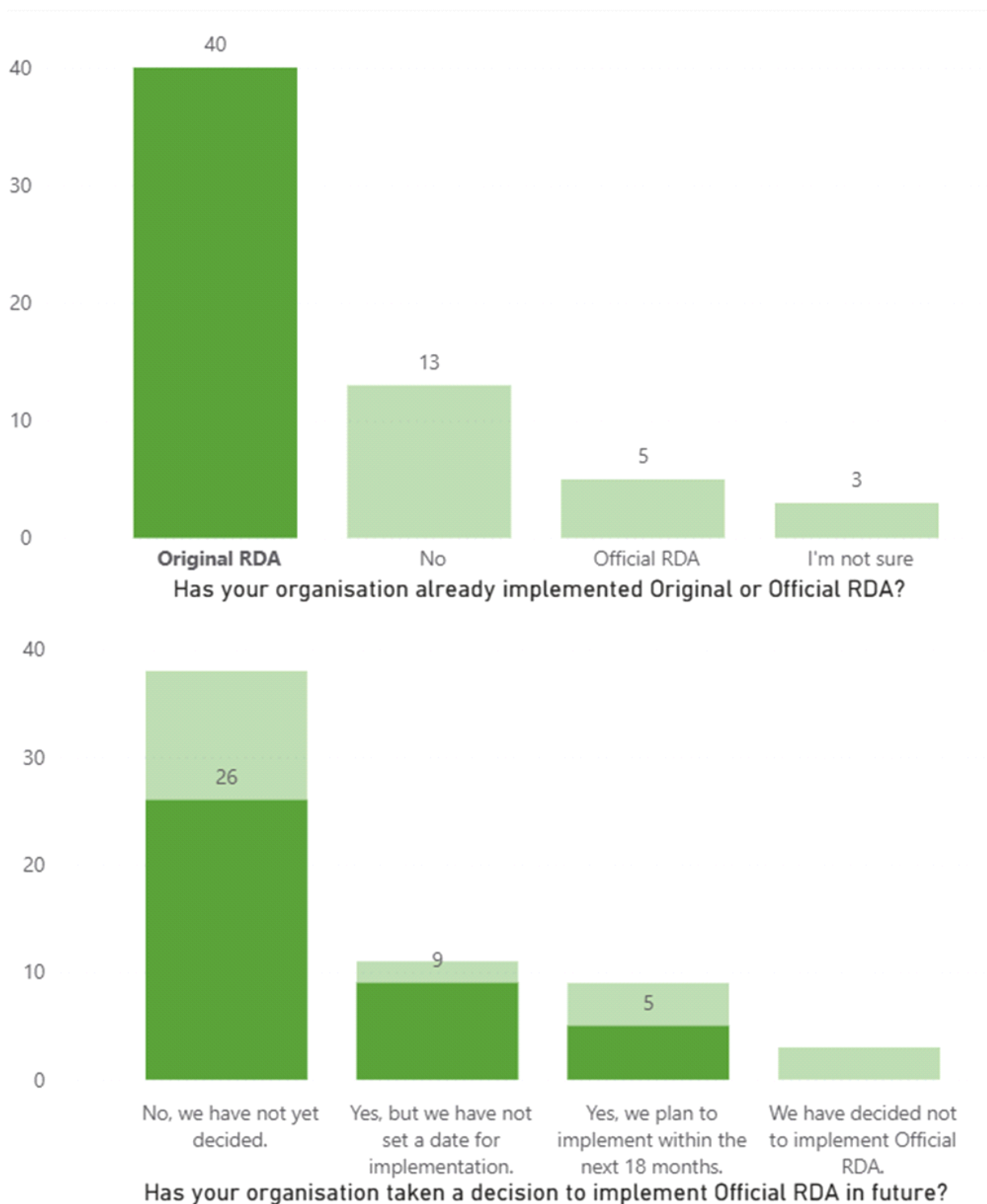
Figure 17: Official RDA implementation plans in libraries that have implemented Original RDA
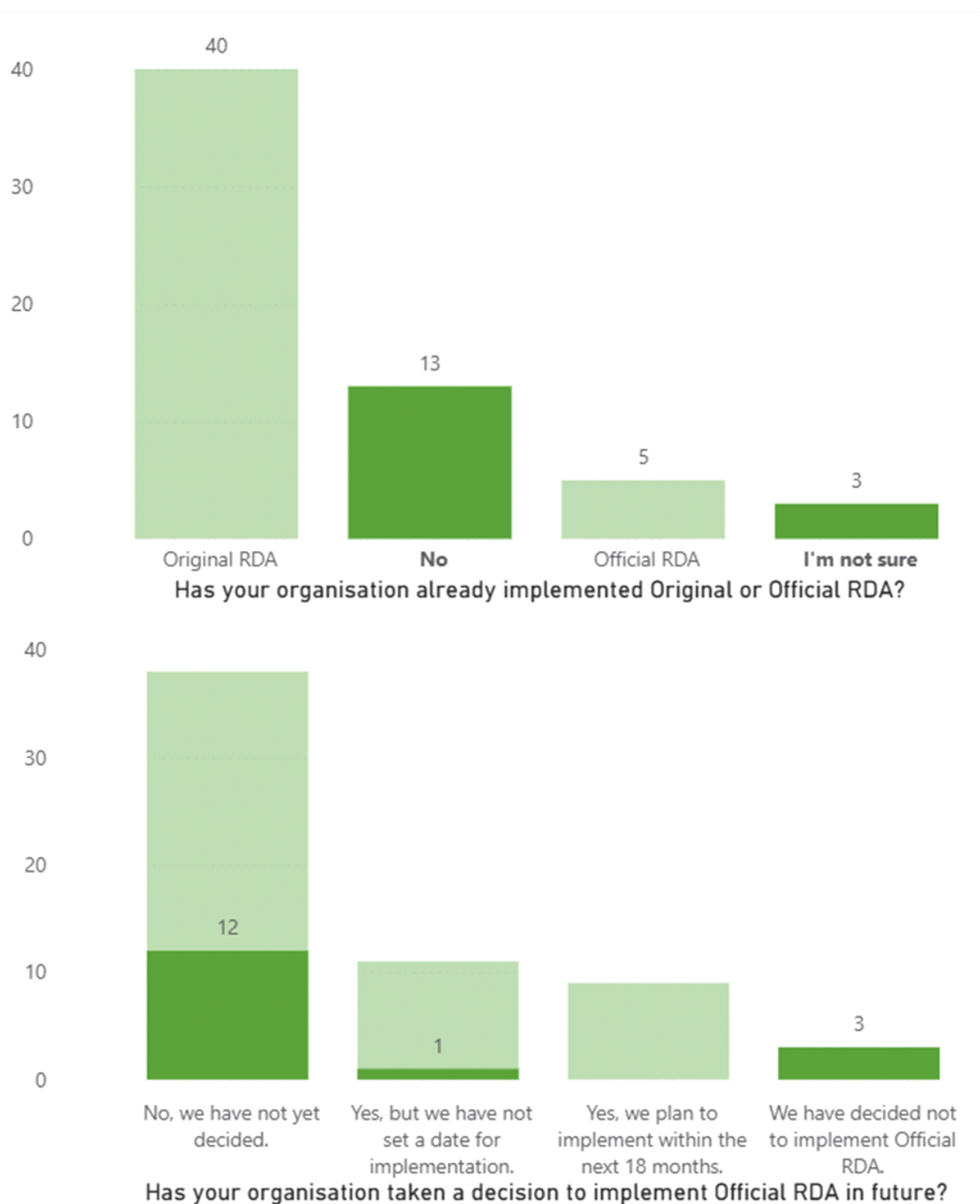
Figure 18: Official RDA implementation plans in libraries that have not implemented Original RDA

Question 14: Does your organisation have a subscription to the RDA toolkit?

Half of those surveyed have an active subscription to the RDA Toolkit. While this is positive it also shows that while many institutions regard RDA as essential for their cataloguing workflows, they do not value a subscription to the toolkit (Figure 20). This is worrying as changes are being made to the standard, and will continue to be made, which institutions will need to be aware of and to incorporate into their local practice. The quarterly Toolkit releases which document the changes are only available to subscribers.

All six respondents who have implemented Official RDA are RDA Toolkit subscribers. All three national libraries are subscribers, likely because all three have stated they are planning to implement Official RDA at some point. Of the 18 academic libraries who responded and are Toolkit subscribers, all have already implemented Original RDA, seven said they intend to implement Official RDA but have not set a date and 11 are undecided.

Does your organisation have a subscription to the RDA Toolkit? (http://access.rdatoolkit.org/)	Number
Yes, we are existing subscribers	30
No, we don't plan to subscribe	26
No, but we plan to subscribe	4
I'm not sure	1

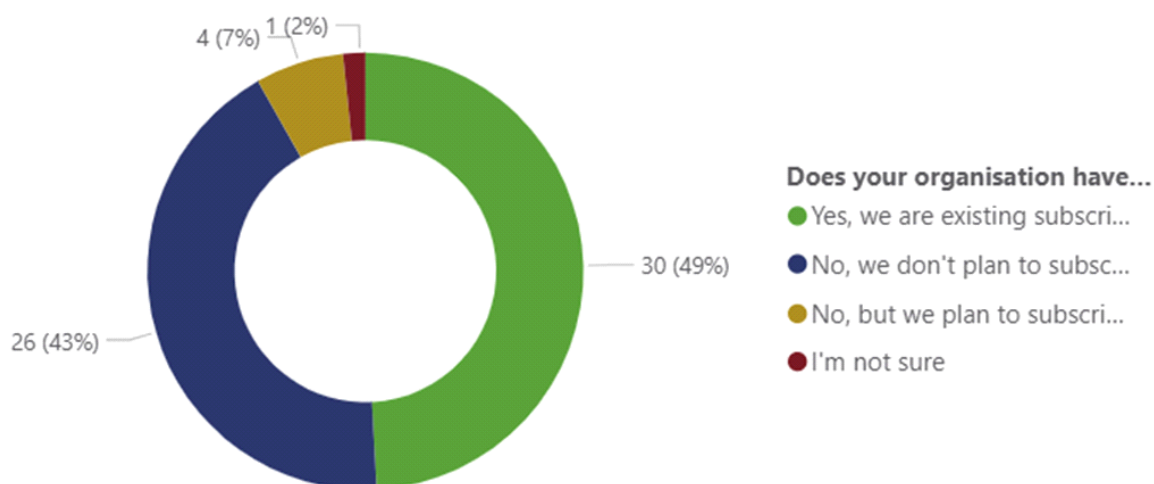**Table 11**: RDA Toolkit subscription

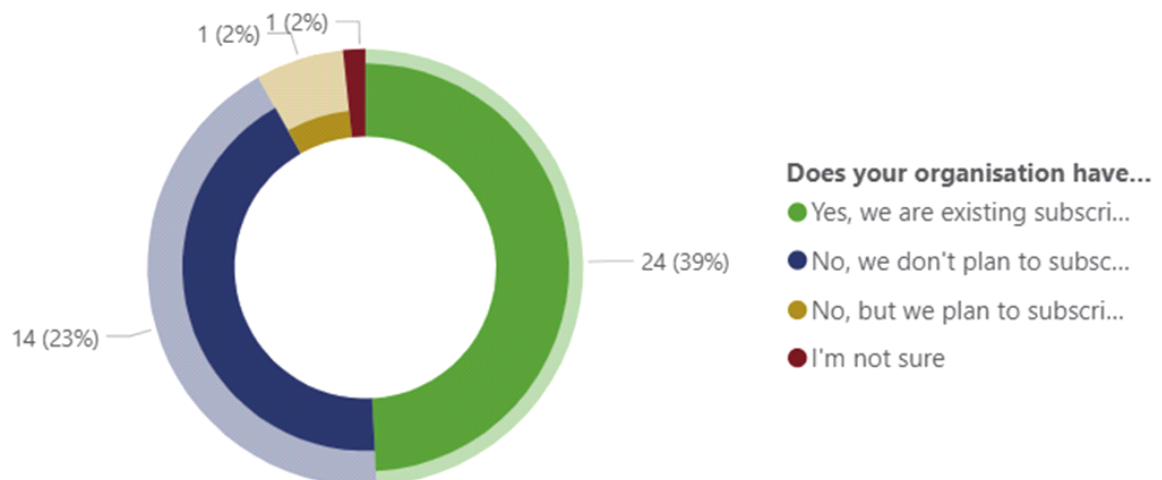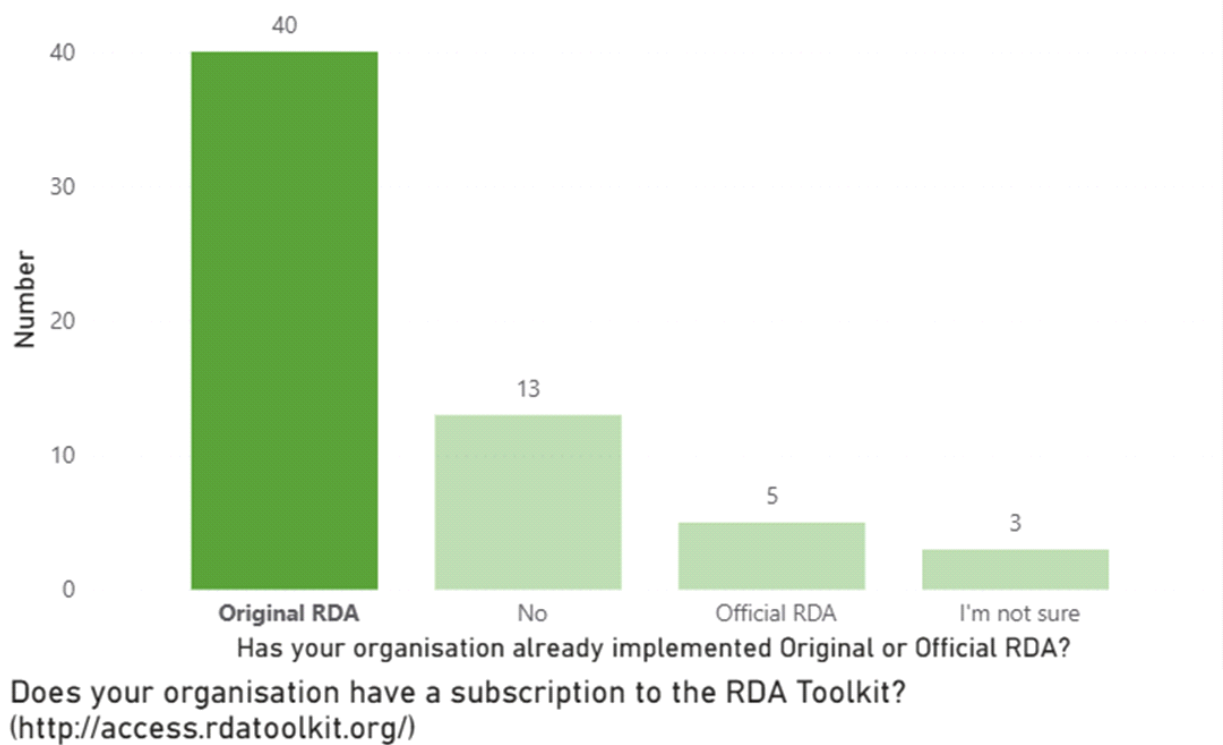**Figure 19**: RDA Toolkit subscription visualisation

Figure 20: RDA Toolkit subscription uptake in libraries that have implemented Original RDA

Question 15: Does your organisation use the RDA registry?

The final question on the current use of RDA tools is on the use of the RDA Registry. Given that even amongst the most engaged users of RDA use of the Toolkit was not 100% it should come as no surprise that the Registry was also very ill used, however, perhaps that is because there isn't much awareness of its usefulness. For example, RDA element sets can be downloaded to assist with creating an application profile, and this requires no subscription to the Toolkit

Only a handful (8) are using the Registry. Of these, one is a national library, three are academic libraries, one is a museum, one is a cathedral, one is a bibliographic service, and one is an independent consultant. These libraries have stated they will implement Official RDA, with only two still undecided (Figure 22).

Does your organisation use the RDA Registry? (https://www.rdaregistry.info/)	Number
No	47
Yes	8
I'm not sure	6

Table 12: RDA Registry use
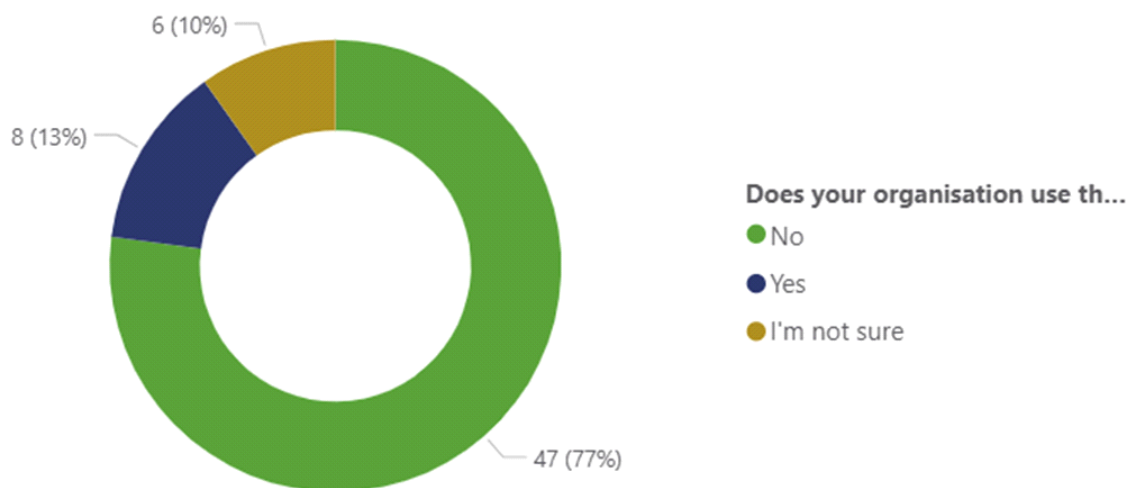
Figure 21: RDA Toolkit Registry use visualisation

Type of Library

Normalized

- Academic Libr...
- Museum or Ga...
- Specialist Library
- Company Libra...
- National Library
- Public Library
- Health Library

Has your organisation taken a decision to implement Official RDA in fut...

Does your organisation use the RDA Registry? (https://www.rdaregistry.info/)

Does your organisa...
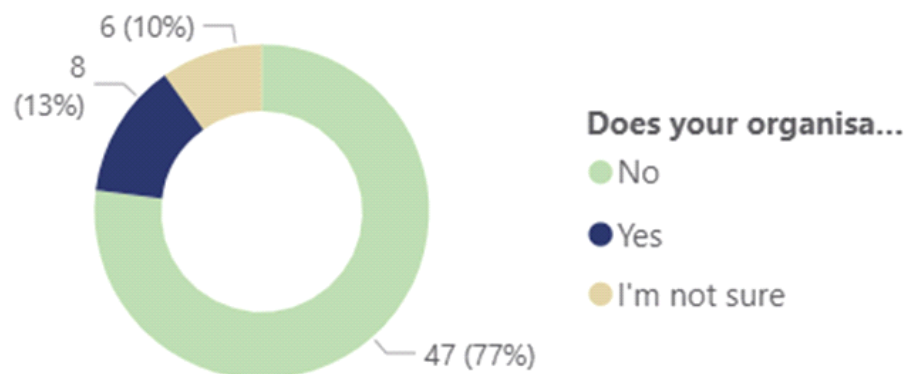
- No
- Yes
- I'm not sure
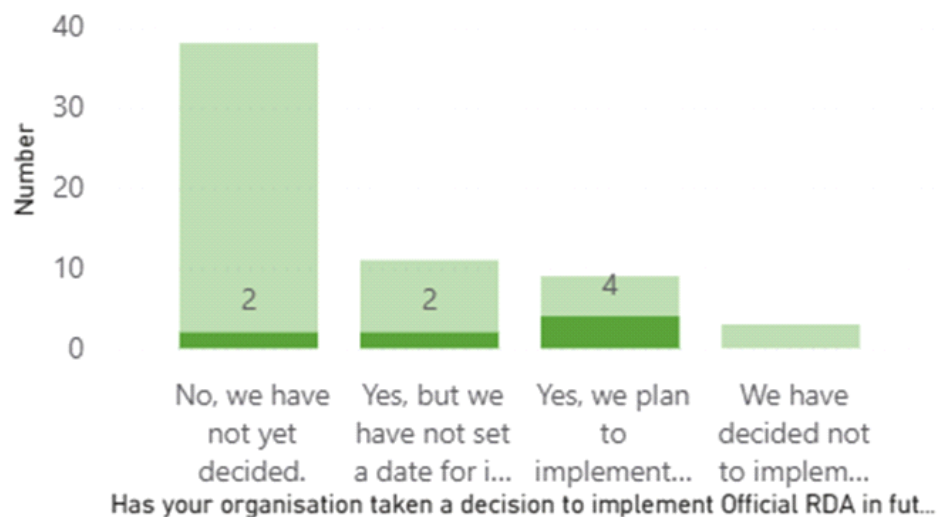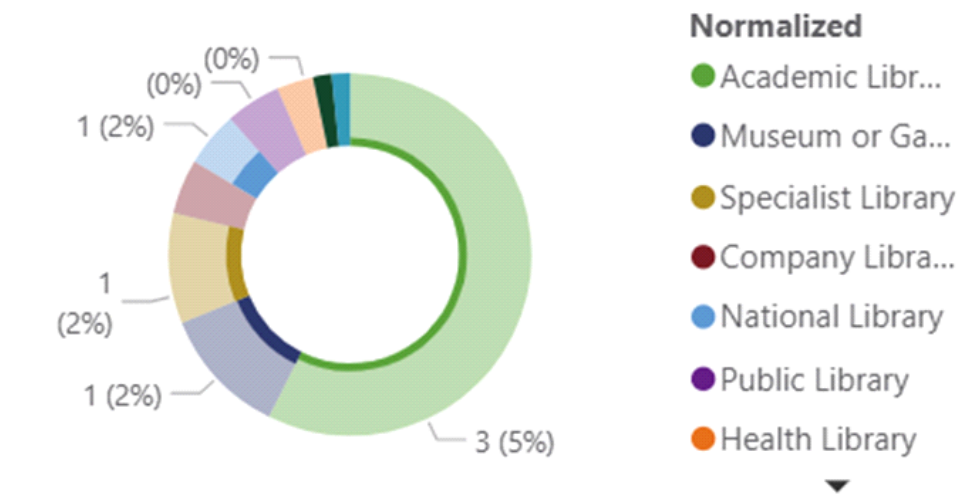
Figure 22: Official RDA implementation plans and library types of RDA Registry users

Question 16: What are your reasons for implementing Official RDA?

Just over a third cannot answer this question as they are not planning to implement Official RDA. If we remove all the responses that indicate no benefit, we can see some clear indicators of the reasons to implement. The primary reason, interoperability, mirrors the results of the 2013 survey. RDA covering the material collected, the need for a replacement standard and the entity-relationship models built-in to RDA are the next highest scoring answers. A few wish to be compliant with standards, be pioneers and make use of RDA as a cost-effective model. Worth noting that only 1.6% this time round, compared to 6.4% in 2013, felt RDA is cost-effective.

What are your reasons for implementing Official RDA?	Number
Not applicable (we are/will not be implementing Official RDA)	34
Interoperability	16
RDA covers the range of materials we collect	11
Current cataloguing code requires revision or replacement	10
We want to implement an entity-relationship cataloguing model	9
Aim to pioneer	1
CIP contract requirements, plus general aim to use current international standards	1
Consistency with UK recommendations	1
RDA is cost effective	1
We are a joint repositories and cataloguing team where REF and Open Access work always trumps cataloguing of library resources. RDA is seen as a nice to have rather than essential.	1

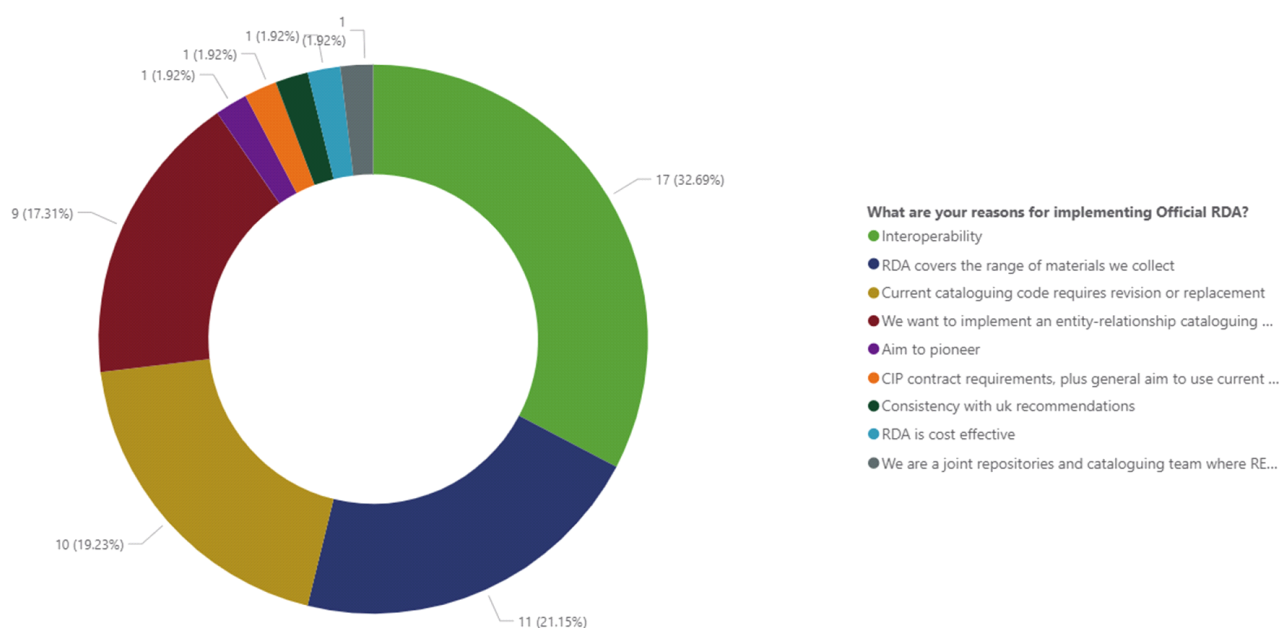**Table 13**: Official RDA implementation reasons

Figure 23: Official RDA implementation reasons visualisation

Question 17: What are your reasons for not implementing Official RDA?

Unfortunately, whatever the technical reason, this question did not work for the participants and has null results. However, from the comments made elsewhere in the survey we can deduce that the perceived costs of implementation, the cost of subscription and the lack of clear-cut benefits would have scored highly as they did in 2013.

Question 18 & 19: What benefits do you expect to gain by implementing Official RDA in the short term (18-24 months)? What benefits do you expect to gain by implementing Official RDA in the long term (more than 2 years)?

Nearly half of institutions are not planning to implement and therefore, see no benefits short or long term to Official RDA. This result seems to be born out of a general lack of embrace by the community of the new standard. To look at the benefits anticipated by those who have decided to implement Official RDA we disregarded the 'not applicable' answers in the further analysis.

There were two qualitative answers amongst these responses. One reflected on the perceived benefits of interoperability and cost savings alongside reputational prestige. The other suggested that RDA was a "nice to have". However, there were some differences between long- and short-term benefits. Interoperability and improved resource discovery stand out as primary benefits, but over the long-term being more responsive to change and enhancing productivity become more important. It is worth reflecting that these benefits, while not unimportant, are unlikely to make for a strong enough business case to senior leadership teams in most academic organisations. The RSC should advocate more on the short- and long-term tangible benefits of Official RDA to empower metadata specialists to make a stronger case for implementation.

If the survey is re-run after the 2027 switch off, it would be useful to include a question to help us understand the benefits which were in fact gained by implementing Official RDA.

What benefits do you expect to gain by implementing Official RDA in the short term (18-24 months)?	Number
Not applicable (we are/will not be implementing Official RDA)	34
Interoperability	13
Improved resource recovery	8
More responsive to change	4
Qualitative answers	2

Table 14: Expected short term benefits of Official RDA implementation
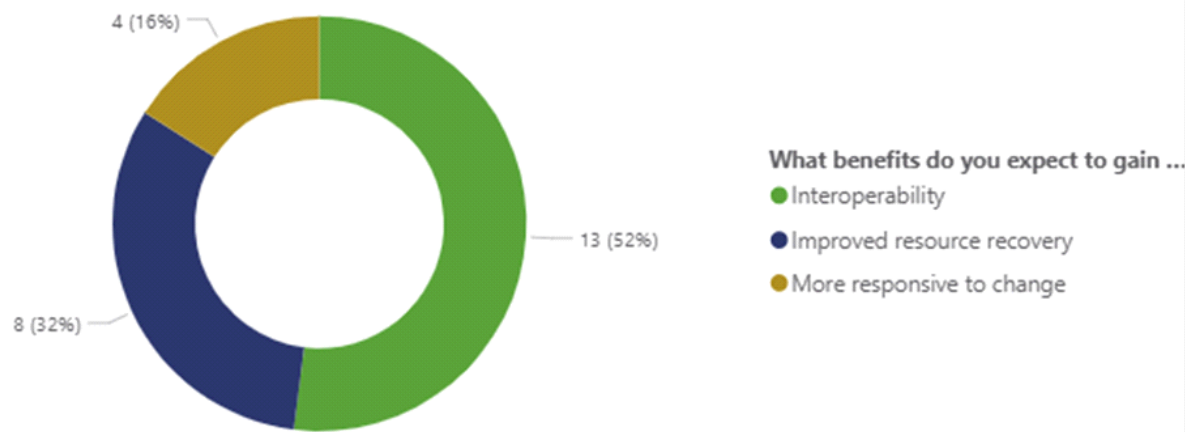
Figure 24: Expected short term (18-24 month) gains of Official RDA implementation visualisation

What benefits do you expect to gain by implementing Official RDA in the long term (more than 2 years)?	Number
Not applicable (we are/will not be implementing Official RDA)	33
Interoperability	9
Improved resource recovery	9
More responsive to change	5
Enhanced productivity	2
Qualitative answers	3

Table 15: Expected long term benefits of Official RDA implementation
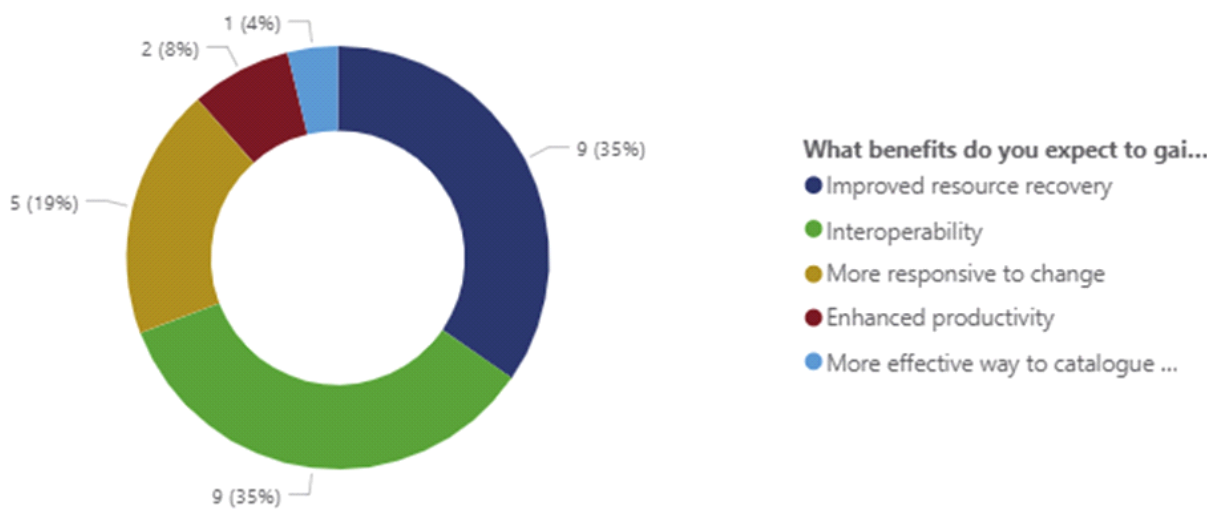

Figure 25: Expected long term (more than 2 years) gains of Official RDA implementation visualisation

Question 20: What material types are in scope for Official RDA at your organisation?

There is a good mixture here of material types that libraries using RDA intend to catalogue. A few will apply the standard to all material types. Most are interested in using it for books and serials. There are also a wide range of use cases across all the sectors.

Material types in RDA	Number
Printed books	39
Serials (Diachronic works)	29
Music	24
Sound Recordings	23
Cartographic Resources	15
Moving Image	15
All materials	13
Ephemera	13
n/a	9
Graphic Materials and Still Images	8
Manuscripts	7
Objects and Realia	7
Archival materials	5
eBooks	1

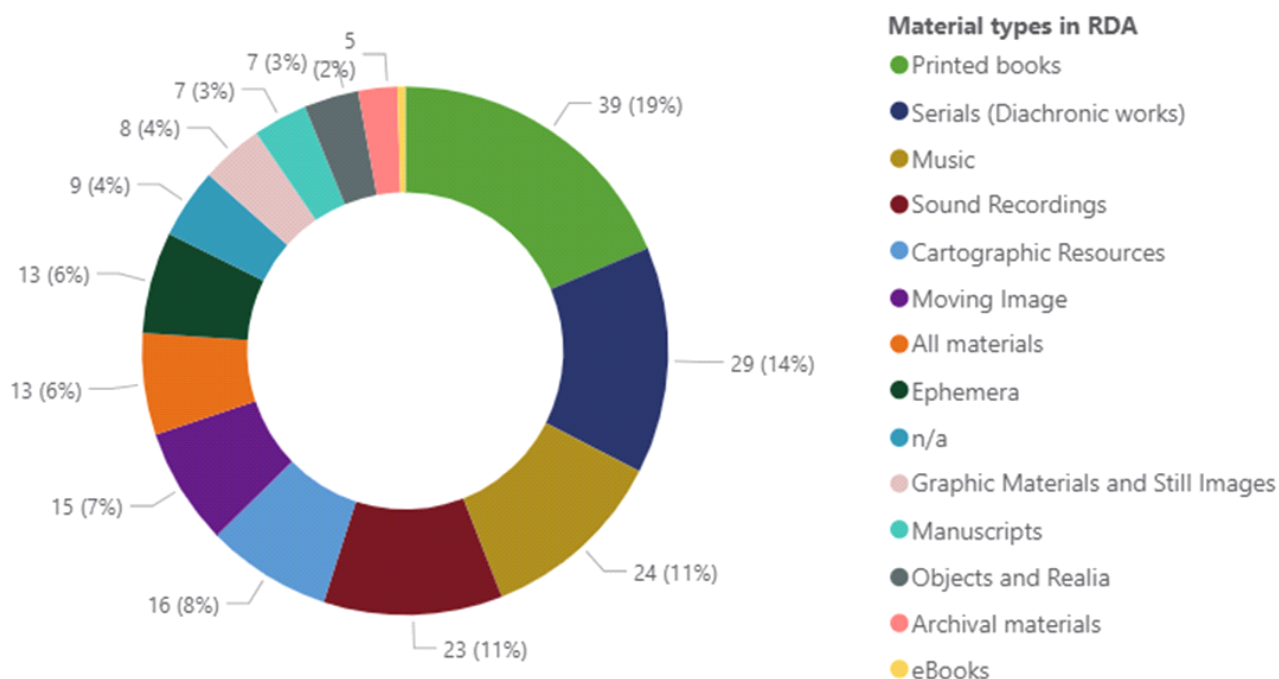**Table 16**: Material types in scope

Figure 26: Material types in scope visualisation

Question 21: What stages of implementation have you undertaken? (Please select all that apply)

Half of the surveyed institutions have no plans to implement Official RDA. Of the rest just under half (12) have completed more than one implementation stage, while the others (15) have completed only a single stage. The tree graph (Figure 28) shows all the stages of implementation of those who have done something (each number representing a single institution) but excluding those who selected not implementing.

Most respondents who plan to implement Official RDA have undertaken initial scoping work and familiarisation with their own procedures and the RDA Toolkit. Based on the information submitted, only three libraries have created application profiles (two academic and one national) and yet this is considered an essential part of implementation. Application profiles are highlighted as a training need by the comments submitted in Section 5 of the survey.

Very few respondents selected the option for 'Secured organisational support and resources', which may be reflected by comments on the perceived difficulty of presenting a business case for the adoption of Official RDA.

Which of these stages of implementation have you undertaken? (Please select all that apply)	Number
Not applicable (we are/will not be implementing Official RDA)	36
Reviewed local cataloguing policies and procedures	13
Become familiar with the RDA Toolkit and implementation scenarios	12
Scoping work	12
Strategy and objectives	10
Prepared training materials for cataloguers, staff and users	8
Formed a project team and established milestones	6
Secured organisational support and resources	6
Created a communication, training and implementation timetable	5
Created application profiles / policy documents	5
Developed an action plan	5
Tested RDA sample records for in scope material types in your system	5
Tested RDA sample records in your users' catalogue interface	5
Set a date for rolling out your implementation of Official RDA	3
Requested and reviewed feedback	2

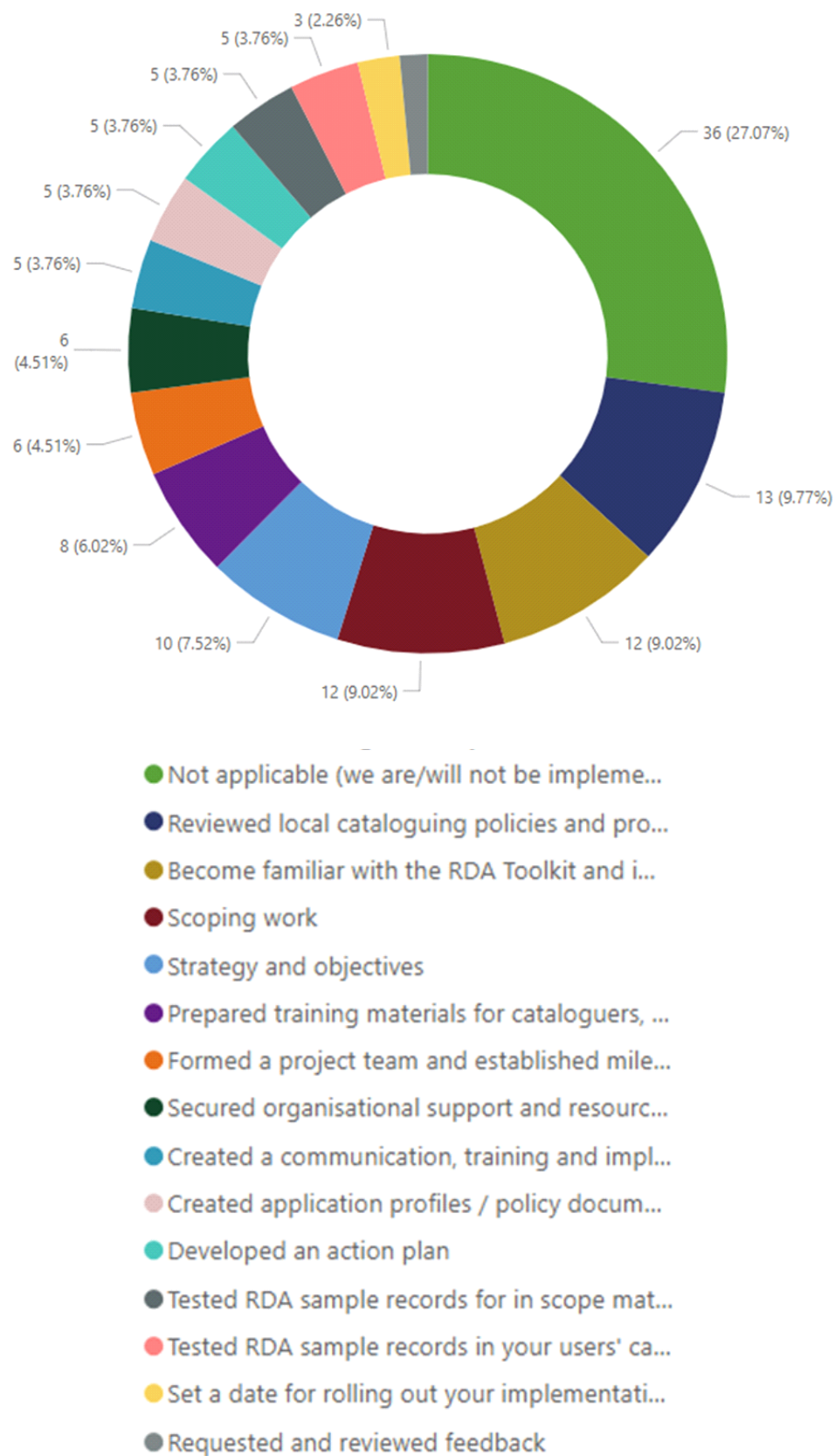**Table 17**: Stages of Official RDA implementation undertaken

Figure 27: Stages of Official RDA implementation undertaken, visualisation
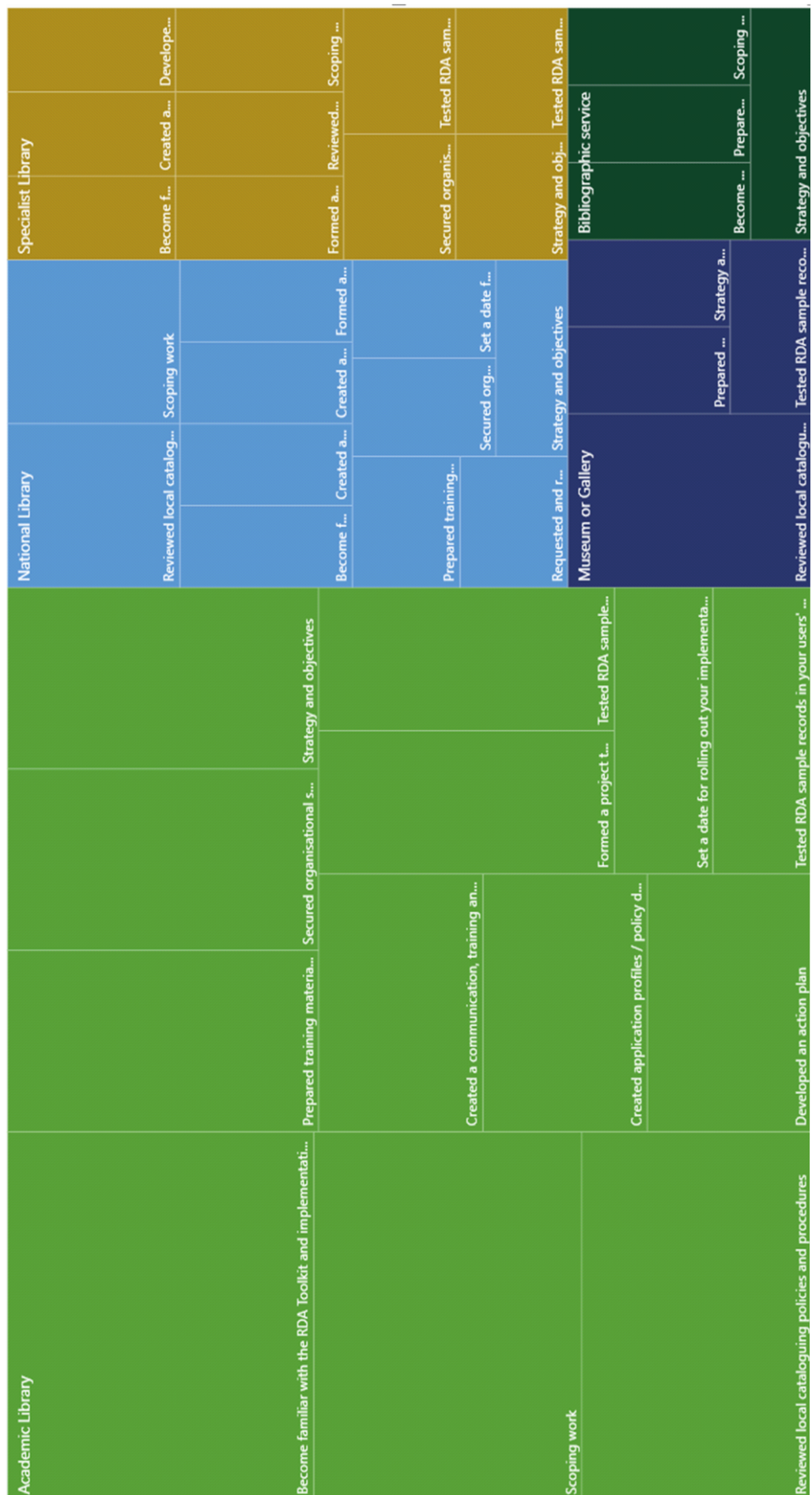
Figure 28: Stages of Official RDA implementation undertaken by library type

Section 5 – Training needs/further comments

This final section was designed to assist UKCoR and MDG in planning future RDA-related activities of maximum impact and in the most cost-effective manner. The comments evidence a need for refreshers on the theory, advice and documentation on the practical side of implementation, and the sharing of information from existing successful implementations. Online delivery was the overall preferred method.

Question 22: What are your anticipated training and development needs for Resource Description and Access?

This question provided a rich set of training needs from the community and feedback about RDA itself. There were requests for further information on the difference between original and Official RDA, for assistance with the practical aspects of implementation such as creating application profiles, but there were also comments on implementation without access to the RDA Toolkit and requests for the provision of clear proof of the benefits.

We present here a snapshot of comments, anonymised:

- In order to make it work fully, training in how to facilitate full entity management
- ... basic Official RDA training will be needed
- No plans
- not yet considered
- Guidance in creating application profiles, provision of templates. Introductory session on why Official RDA is different, why most cataloguers won't be working direct in RDA Toolkit
- ... in-between training that allows us to make use of the systems we currently have - on RDA in Marc21, and on Bibframe
- ... we would need training on developing our own or using existing application profiles for each of the format types within scope
- Generally, I'd like to see the gulf between those who've learned practical application on the job, and the experts who have a lot of theoretical knowledge bridged through training resources
- ... I would like very straightforward, practical training to help me adapt my current practice to the latest version of RDA
- Use of the Official RDA Toolkit - Basics of application and structure of Official RDA - Major differences between Original and Official RDA - How to create and link new workflows in/to Official RDA - ... a clear overview of the benefits to our users and library of the Official RDA would be a great start.
- ... our library have the original RDA book in printed format. [The cataloguers] rarely look at it. Records are MARC based ..., and classed as RDA, because 3XX tags are included. That's about the limit of it. There are no further indications

of upgrading to the Toolkit, and making a business case for the subscription to the Toolkit. So, no training currently necessary.

- I'd like to better understand the conceptual model behind the official RDA - how it relates to FRBR and LRM, its framework, terminology, and its role in linked data.

- Specific RDA Toolkit training, overall 3R training

- Application profiles, policy statements and examples for materials which we currently catalogue to Original RDA. Explanations of new properties, classes and relationships. Suitable infrastructure and systems development

- To upgrade to Official RDA, we need free-at-the-point-of-use training materials for MARC21 and BIBFRAME. Our senior management don't see the value of upgrading.

- ... understanding on how to use the toolkit more effectively. Examples to work from.

- It depends on how much the standards genuinely change to reflect the standard, and how much of this work we will undertake locally and how much assume our LMS/service providers will undertake for us

- ... basic RDA training for new cataloguers as they are recruited

- We do a lot of guesswork due to not having a RDA toolkit subscription

- creating application profiles, RDA policies, guidelines from the RDA Toolkit and how to map those with existing MARC21 [standards and ILS setup]

- More information about the benefits of Official RDA

- It would be great to have a recorded webinar of an overview summary/ introduction of the changes and how libraries who have minimal cataloguing staff could go about implementing it.

- We need guidance from someone who has the Toolkit. We don't use it and don't find it cost effective. Our entire [group] has decided to forego any implementation of 'new RDA' until sometime in the far future.

- We cannot justify paying for access to the toolkit but I catalogue using in-house templates which include basic RDA fields.

Question 23: What are your preferred delivery methods?

For the smaller and specialist libraries bite-size content and asynchronous learning were welcomed. Almost all groups wanted a mix of video and webinar content. Academic libraries showed a strong preference for online delivery of content.

Library type	What are your preferred delivery methods?	Number
Academic Library	Video content	21
Academic Library	Live webinars	19
Academic Library	Asynchronous learning module (e.g. Moodle)	16
Academic Library	In-person training workshops	15
Academic Library	All of the above	1
Academic Library	already implemented	1
Academic Library	Books & self-study	1
Academic Library	Clearly written guidance and text	1
Academic Library	Mix of above	1
Academic Library	No plans.	1
Academic Library	Standalone manuals of standards that one can read and annotate	1
Bibliographic services	In-person training workshops	1
Bibliographic services	Live webinars	1
Bibliographic services	Video content	1
Company Library	Live webinars	3
Company Library	Asynchronous learning module (e.g. Moodle)	2
Company Library	In-person training workshops	1
Company Library	Video content	1
Health Library	Bite-size short form multimedia content	1
Health Library	In-person training workshops	1
Health Library	Live webinars	1
Health Library	Video content	1
Independent consultant	In-person training workshops	1
Independent consultant	Live webinars	1
Museum or Gallery	Video content	6
Museum or Gallery	Live webinars	5
Museum or Gallery	In-person training workshops	4
Museum or Gallery	Bite-size short form multimedia content	3
Museum or Gallery	Asynchronous learning module (e.g. Moodle)	1

Table 18: Preferred learning methods (continued on next page)

Library type	What are your preferred delivery methods?	Number
National Library	Bite-size short form multimedia content	2
National Library	In-person training workshops	2
National Library	Live webinars	2
National Library	Video content	2
National Library	Asynchronous learning module (e.g. Moodle)	1
Public Library	In-person training workshops	2
Public Library	Live webinars	1
Public Library	N/A	1
Specialist Library	Bite-size short form multimedia content	2
Specialist Library	Asynchronous learning module (e.g. Moodle)	1
Specialist Library	DK	1
Specialist Library	In-person training workshops	1
Specialist Library	Live webinars	1
Specialist Library	N/A	1
Specialist Library	none	1
Specialist Library	Video content	1

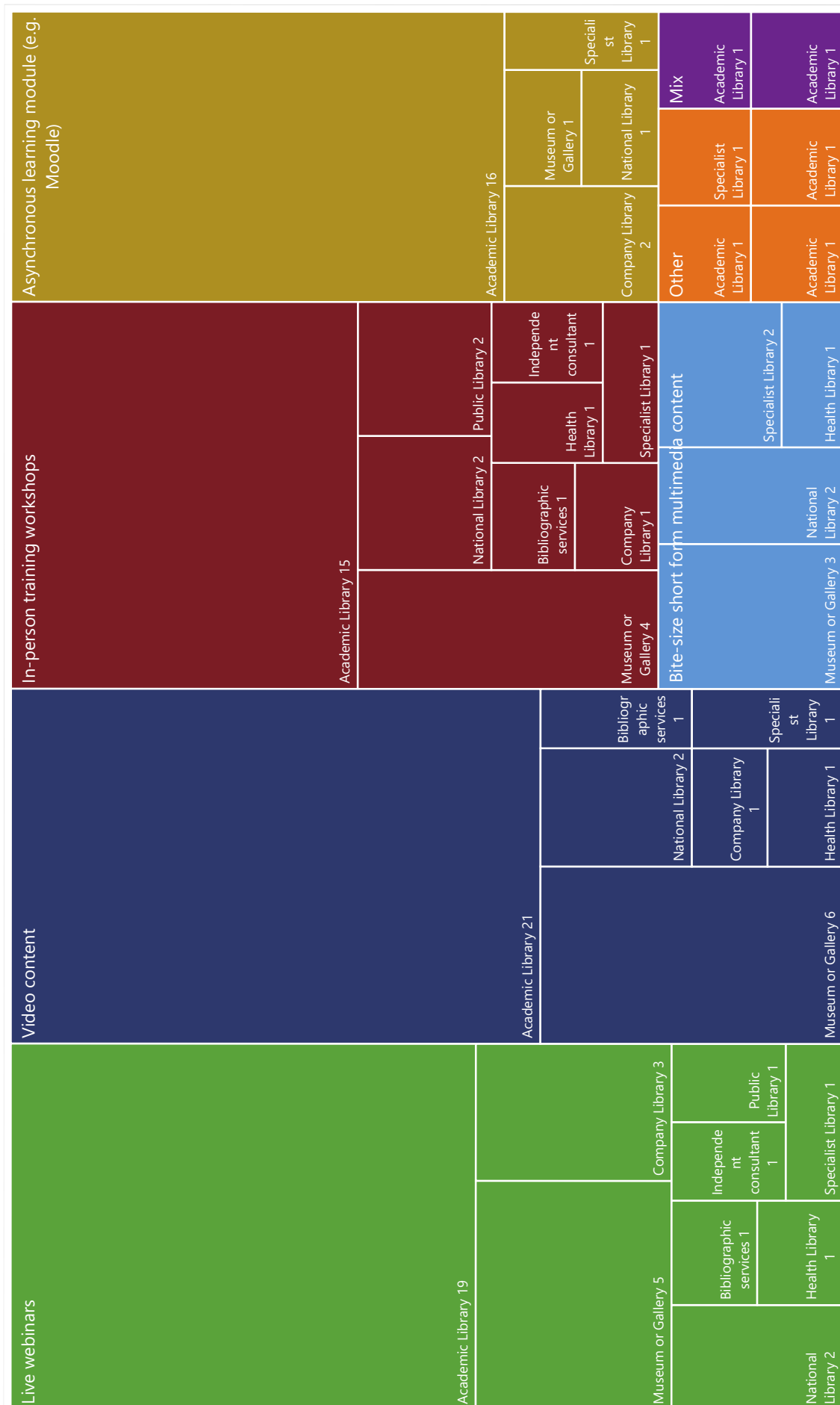**Table 18**: Preferred learning methods (continued from previous page)

Figure 29: Preferred learning methods visualisation

Question 24: Is there any other content that you would like to see UKCoR produce?

We again supply a "warts and all" sample of responses for this question:

- Advantages of subscribing to the RDA Toolkit
- Instructions on everything for free, reference materials and videos
- UKCoR to continue to keep the UK cataloguing up-to-date with new developments in RDA
- Official RDA is such a theoretical model, we will need guidelines for application
- Case studies/practical evidence of benefits of switching to Official RDA.
- ... a 'real-life' Application profile would provide a "Ah" moment for many!
- ... [I]nfo on if any libraries are not implementing or how very small organisations ... plan on implementing it and retro-converting all their records. And if they have what they gained by doing it.
- Usable manuals
- Updates from institutions that are implementing Official RDA
- Practical implementation guidance aimed at a small team
- Free-at-the-point-of-use training materials for MARC21 and BIBFRAME
- Self-paced interactive content
- Not sure (39/61 responses)
- Support for public libraries
- There [must] be engagement from the sector and a willingness to tell UKCoR what they can do to help. I think it's fair to say that engagement, particularly with RDA, has tailed off.
- More information on benefits of Official RDA

Question 25: Any further comments about anything in the survey?

There were 26 responses to this question. Some commented on flaws in the survey design for which the authors of this report can only apologise. We present here another snapshot of the comments made by the community.

- We consider ourselves RDA, but have not really done anything to facilitate full relational functionality. I don't think Alma does it, or if it does, what we can do to help it work is unknown to me
- XXXX would welcome working with other UK libraries on best practice, given shortage of cataloguer resource in UK academic libraries. We have anxieties around future of original RDA and whether it will be archived effectively
- I have answered N/A to the Official RDA implementation questions. I still feel there's a huge need to be convinced of the need and the effort involved before implementing Official RDA, even greater than there was for Original RDA, which was easier to go along with as the New Standard. We have much less control of incoming data than then; we are comparatively well staffed (staffing is more likely to go down than up) but I am extremely reluctant to have to retrain all my staff with no demonstrable benefit; there are other more exciting projects to pursue with greater chance of concrete results and closer alignment with institutional priorities (wikidata, retro cataloguing, collection management)
- The main barrier to implementing RDA in our library is that the quantity of new cataloguing we do is very small. We focus on e-resources for current provision and these are not added to our LMS but our surfaced through a discovery service. So, although we would like to keep up there are some barriers to making the change
- How do we try to convince the community that RDA is a necessity, not a nice to have? We have bibliographic standards for a reason, and the way the Toolkit is priced and produced is a way of ensuring that we have two classes of cataloguers - the haves and the have-nots. And the have-nots are going to be the smaller libraries with a small cataloguing department, or solo librarians who are not interested in cataloguing and do it as a necessity. I also find the language in the Toolkit to be unclear
- After attending a few webinars and workshops, our institution has just begun a general conversation about adopting and implementing the official RDA. So far, we metadata specialists have provided introductory information to help put everything into context. This appears to be quite a significant shift, and it's important for us to gain a clearer understanding of the framework and the elements involved at different levels - such as tools, policies, workflows, and the time and resources required for implementation. The next step will be to have a more in-depth discussion about what migrating to the new RDA entails - what the requirements are, the steps involved, and how to assess its feasibility and potential impact

- Smaller institutions like us do not need complex and involved RDA implementation process, it makes it sound daunting when it does not need to be

- We weren't even aware of Official RDA - nor of the differences between original and official RDA!

- At present, we can't see many advantages to implementing Official RDA whilst we continue to use a MARC structure. It would cause us to reframe our understanding of bibliographic data, but the presentation of it in MARC would be unlikely to change

- We heard back from [a vendor] that they have not implemented Official RDA yet, hence my answers. I imagine our catalogue will therefore be a hybrid in the future and I am interested in learning more

- The new form of RDA is very obtuse and doesn't make any sense to me

- We are a very small specialist library with AACR2, RDA and older non-roman script bib records. TBH I didn't even know there was new RDA until this survey. Our priorities really are quick solid cataloguing to get books available as quickly as possible, with little expense.

References

Danskin, A. (2013) 'RDA in the UK: implementation survey', *Catalogue & Index*, 173, pp. 2-12. Available at: https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.cilip.org.uk/resource/collection/F71F19C3-49CF-462D-8165-B07967EE07F0/Catalogue_and_Index_issue_173,_December_2013.pdf [Accessed 14 December 2025]

Book review: The AI and Data Revolution

Reviewed by: **Sergio Alonso Mislata**

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The declared aim of this book is to provide students of business and technology - and, more broadly, all Artificial Intelligence (AI) users and developers - with a clear sense of what AI and its intensive use of data represent for both the public and private sectors.

At the forefront of the current "AI and data revolution" is the rise of generative AI (GenAI). It is perhaps because of this central role that no analysis of other AI disciplines is provided: even if they are currently significant, they are not necessarily "revolutionary" in the way they process data to produce information.

According to the author, GenAI is a subset of Machine Learning/Deep Learning that, like other techniques, can make sense of massive datasets, but can also generate new content based on these. Within GenAI, Large Language Models (LLMs) occupy a central place. LLM-based models are trained mostly on vast and diverse collections of unstructured language-based data. Informed by an analysis of the patterns observed in the data they are trained on, they offer, when prompted, information (text, images, and even video) that seems to be accurate and relevant. It was as recently as 2022, with the launch of ChatGPT (a chatbot built on top of OpenAI's LLM), that GenAI suddenly looked like a mature discipline and its possibilities became immediately evident.

For the last 20 years, data has become a determining factor that shapes the way industries organise themselves and how their services and products are created. Companies such as Alphabet, Meta, Amazon, Uber, Spotify, Apple, and many other companies across every major industry have, to a great extent, attained a leading position thanks to their ability to gather, process, and exploit data efficiently. The current context dictates that the next step to secure their competitive advantage would be a more integral implementation of GenAI technologies into their business models, an implementation that would only become significantly impactful with the

development of domain-specific applications built on top of (generically developed) LLMs.

De Saulles stresses at various points the fact that the costs involved in training and continuously updating LLMs are enormous. On the one hand, for example, the global shortage of AI specialists drives salaries up. On the other hand, the creation and maintenance of large-scale data centres require vast quantities of energy to run and water for their servers to cool down. The onerous nature of the business places larger, well-established AI-intensive companies in a much better position to survive and thrive within an increasingly competitive environment.

But what may feel more relevant is not the examination of the costs these companies might need to assume to succeed, but the price we as a society might already be paying for this success. De Saulles offers a very interesting analysis of current and expected economic, environmental, and social issues caused by the widespread adoption of GenAI. Among them are job losses; rising household costs and a natural environment under threat as AI-intensive companies are expected to compete for priority access to energy and water in order to ensure the proper functioning of their gigantic, power-hungry data centres; and the societal risks of misinformation and manipulation that highlight the urgent need for strong data education to safeguard democratic life.

De Saulles also provides a useful overview of the different national policy responses to the rise of GenAI and the ways companies use personal and protected data. The United States and the European Union are presented as two distinct, if not entirely opposing, models, with the UK somewhere in between. While both sides oppose monopolistic abuses, the US tends to prioritise the commercial interests of GenAI companies (which are mainly American), whereas the EU (more a consumer than a producer) seeks to establish regulations that place the rights of individuals and communities above the interests of foreign technological behemoths.

Everything considered, it is fair to say that this book offers a solid overview of the principles shaping GenAI's development and its growing presence in society, while inviting readers to consider GenAI as a force that will profoundly influence the natural environment, human interaction, and governance in the near future.