

# **Introducing Resource Description and Access: taming the new cataloging rules**

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RDA: Resource Description and Access Executive Briefing

Tuesday March 23 & 30, 2010

Bloomsbury Hotel

London



Good morning



## Greetings from Texas!

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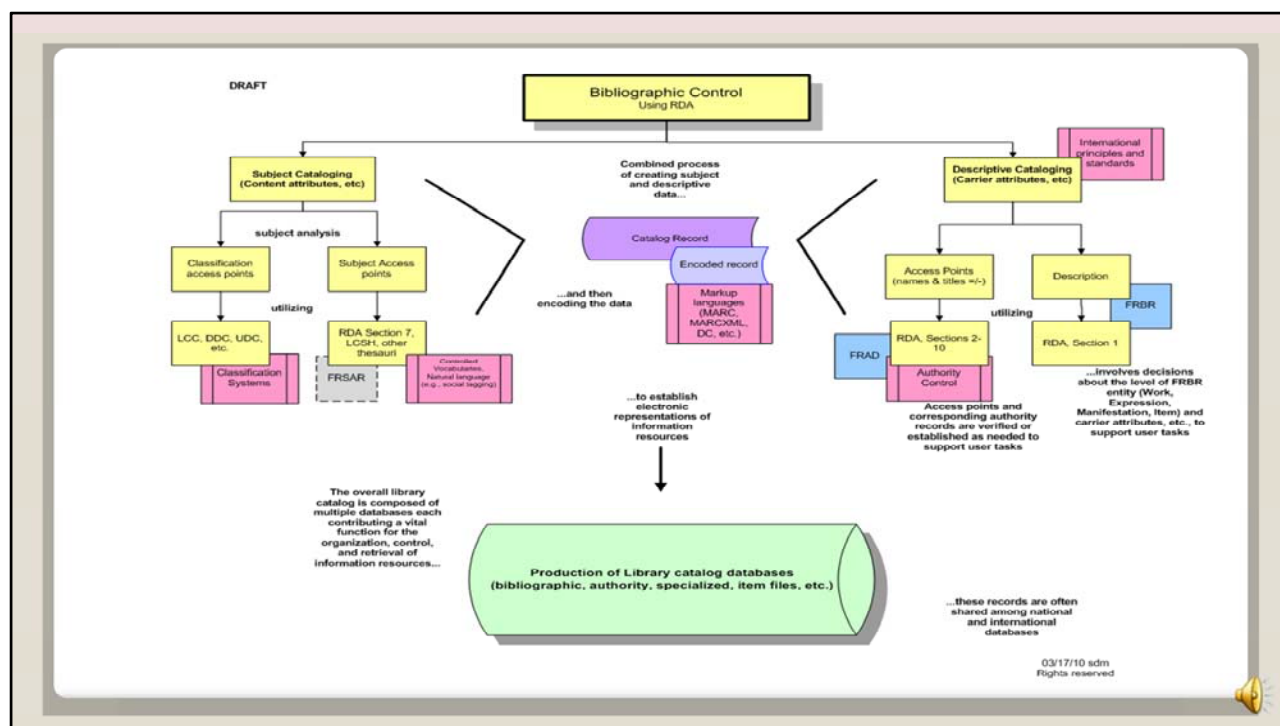
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My name is ....

I'm very grateful for the opportunity to speak with you today



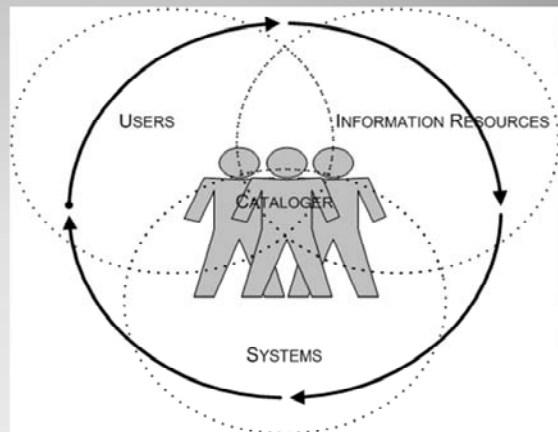
This is a chart that I give to my students at the beginning of our cataloging and classification course. I'm sure it not very readable up on a screen, but I've sent it as a separate file that can either be printed out or downloaded. I'm also willing to email to anyone interested.

I've modified this chart to show how RDA is used in the overall process of bibliographic control—you'll see that on the right in the bottom yellow boxes. The chart is very much based in our long-standing, traditional process of bibliographic control, and while I know that we can't integrate RDA into it and expect things remain unchanged, it gives us an overall view of the process and how our tools and resources help us to provide a product—i.e., how to go about creating representations of information resources that consist of encoded data, or packets of data. As we become more accustomed and practiced in using RDA I hope to be able to modify this chart to better reflect changes to the overall process.

I do believe that the fundamentals of bibliographic control remain unchanged..that is Information is organized in an information system to facilitate access and retrieval. The universe of information resources is studied just as a biologist studies living beings. The carrier and the content of these resources are analyzed for every useful piece/chunk/microdot of information. When a new information "creature" appears catalogers determine its attributes, and how to translate those attributes into usable access points within information systems. Most importantly, these access points serve to help people to navigate the system in order to find, identify, select, and obtain the resources regardless of whether they are searching for a known-item, searching by category, searching for a piece of a resource, or even just browsing out of curiosity.

So, again, this chart simply gives us a way of looking at the process and I fully expect

- Rethinking bibliographic control
- Rethinking the role of the cataloger
  - Not just a transcriber
  - Information *translator*
- Cataloging is a communication process



## What is changing? What isn't?

In recent years, there has been a call put out by the international cataloging community to rethink bibliographic control for the current information environment. Many have criticized the cataloging profession for not keeping up with the demands of times in terms of the volume of information produced and the types of information resources that are being created and used. There have been intense debates about how much change is needed, what needs to be thrown out, and what needs to be retained in terms of cataloging processes, tools, resources and standards. One of the more intense debates concerns the very existence of the library catalog and while a catalog may function as portals to other information resources or databases, is not the primary purpose of a catalog still to represent the resources found in or linked to a particular library collection?

There is a underlying urgency to questions such as these because of the perceived threat from the non-traditional technology resulting from user's ever increasing dependence on and confidence in the Internet and the Web for information. The question has been asked—are libraries still important now that search engines have become so powerful and offers such quick searches? (not necessarily “precise” searches.) There is no definitive answer.

Regardless, I think we can all agree that the role of the cataloging is changing—the catalogers role in this information environment in terms of the goals of organization and control of information resources. It isn't enough to simply create records with a certain set of data. Cataloging is a communication process in which catalogers function as translators, or interpreters, of information and information resources.

This involves translation between the user and the information resources, but also translation between the resource and the system itself. This act of translation, when done well, should enable the system, the user, and the information resources, to come together on common ground. Now, I have a graphic on this slide—its overly simplified—but it gives a sense of where the cataloger functions...

For example, the librarian once interpreted search results for the user, or at the very least with the user, but this is happening less and less, if at all. Users search alone within the catalog system and the only voice the librarian may have, and thus the only guidance they can give, is the catalog record itself.

- Catalog as a relational database
- Underlying conceptual model based on entity-relationship (ER) database model
  - FRBR –entity levels (work, expression, manifestation, item), entity relationships, user tasks,
  - FRAD—same entities within context of authority control
- Creation of representations of information resources
- Continually governing representations

## Functionality of the catalog

It's very important for catalogers to understand not only the process of bibliographic control, but also of the underlying conceptual model of the catalog as a relational database based on the entity-relationship model. [1]

I feel this is an area in which many catalogers are deficient. They must understand the core principles guiding the construction and maintenance of system. Most importantly, the cataloger needs to know why information is organized in a certain way in order to help the user accomplish certain tasks as they search a collection of information resources.

FRBR and FRAD are an important step towards this understanding because it gives us a model based on relationships between entities and tasks that need to be supported by the kind of data we input and how it is structured.

A database starts with a conceptual model. What do we want the database to do? What kind of data does it need? How do we put data in it? How do users get information out of it? How do choices made about conceptual models affect how a person retrieves information?

Catalogers are not limited to just the creation of representations or surrogates of information resources. Instead, they are involved in continually governing (controlling) those representations within the context of an information system. This governing has a direct affect on the access to that information by users, information professionals and the information system itself.

- Internet search engines not limited to bibliographic collections but not much structure and much redundancy
- Social sites and social connections
- Recommender systems (e.g., Amazon.com)

## User's experience with functionality

What have user's become used to in terms of user experiences of functionality? They are used to....

- Internet search engines not limited to bibliographic collections but not much structure and much more redundancy
- social sites and social connections
- recommender systems (e.g., Amazon.com)

The overall problem is that all these additional functions add amazing complexity to already complex library catalogs and so must be controlled.

The use of the ER model in FRBR and FRAD does not get into some issues raised by Internet search engines, social relationship issues, and recommender systems. This is not because they are not wanted, but because it has been a major effort simply to apply ER model to basics of cataloging.

- RDA

- Broadens the scope of what we can catalog
- Allows for more granular approach

Deliberately  
constructed  
'intellectual  
spaces'

**What RDA allows us to do**

RDA is not a complete change in the rules, in many ways it is a reconfiguration of what we already do now. At the same time, it is both a broadening of the scope of what we catalog, in terms of information resources, as well as a more granular approach to providing access to these “intellectual spaces”

So, in other words, the “catalog” is not going away, rather how we deliberately construct and how users access the catalog is changing.



- Introduces descriptive and subject cataloging
  - RDA is a major focus of the book, but it covers the entire range of organizing and controlling information resources
- Traditional practices
- New and emerging practices (e.g., social tagging)

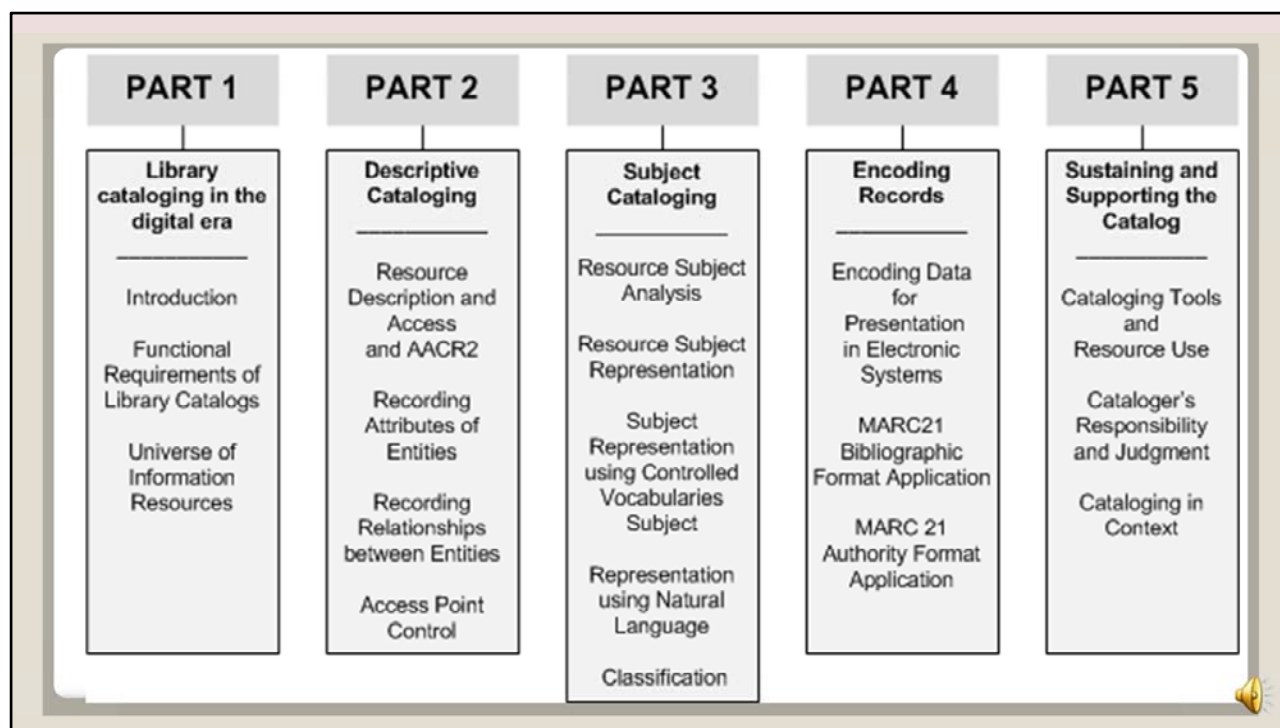
## Scope of Textbook

I want to wrap up by talking a bit about the structure and content of my cataloging and classification textbook that I am working on. First, just to give you some background on me---I've been teaching in this area since 1998, and have worked as a cataloger in various institutions here in the States so I feel that I can confidently address this subject area. The last few years have seen the rise of several major issues within the global cataloging community—in particular the angst surrounding such a monumental task as changing how we catalog and why.

Students must also learn to approach and identify a broad range of information resources, resource attributes, and an array of relationships between resources. They must be adaptable—they must know how to work within and move between any number of information systems.

My textbook is focused on information organization within a library environment but I feel it can also lend itself to non-library environments. It will instruct students in the use of many traditional cataloging processes, but also try to address new and emerging practices such as folksonomies and social tagging, and how these new tools may be incorporated into the more traditional practices.





The textbook is divided into 5 parts or areas and has a total of 19 chapters. Each of the five sections addresses a pivotal part of the cataloging enterprise.

Part 1 seeks to contextualize cataloging practices by discussing the current information environment and the role of the cataloger, and continues with a discussion the functionality of library catalogs and the universe of information resources...looking at the variety of resources a cataloger may encounter, as well as bibliographic relationships between resources.

Part 2 addresses descriptive cataloging using the new Resource Description and Access (RDA) cataloging rules, as well as AACR2, recording of attributes of entities and the relationships between those entities, and authority control. RDA puts a much greater emphasis on authority control than AACR2 did. This is a major change that we need to take notice of and adjust our practices. I also struggled a bit with whether or not to include discussion of AACR2 at all...but in the end I decided that for several years catalogers will need to know both sets of rules as libraries make the transition because it will not be an overnight transition and the more catalogers understand how things have been done and how things will be done, the stronger is their service.

The chapters in Part 3 continue illustrating the description of, and relationships between, information resources through the designation and collocation of intellectual content of the resources within the library catalog system. Within the chapter on the user of natural language it will explore the addition of user-created social tags and 'folksonomies' either alone or in combination with traditional subject representation. An example of this might be to let the users add subject tags or phrases directly to records or through some sort of moderated process. For example, LibraryThing.com offers a widget that allows the addition of user-generated tags to catalog records in an effort to share the collective wisdom of the library users.

- RDA enables deeper connection between the users and the resources
- Complex? Yes
- Unknown variables? Probably.

## Catalog as catalyst

I see the information environment as dynamic and requiring the cataloger to respond to its fluid and active state. This environment demands that a cataloger work not only to describe the types of information resources available in a library collection, but also show its users the relationships that exist between resources or even parts of resources.

In that sense, the goal of library cataloging has always been to act as a catalyst for the reader's acquisition of information by providing description and subject access points in records so that they may identify and distinguish among the many resources contained within the library's collection, as well as what may lie outside its parameters.

**Thank you!**

