

To: RDA Steering Committee
From: Francis Lapka, Chair, RSC Rare Materials Working Group
Subject: Early Printed Resources and Rare Printed Resources
Related Documents:

- RSC/Rare WG/2 Revision to RDA 1.8.1 Numbers Expressed as Numerals or as Words
- RSC/Rare WG/3 Revision to RDA 3.4.5 Extent of Text
- RSC/Rare WG/4 Revision to RDA 3.12 Book Format
- RSC/Rare WG/5 Revision to RDA 3.21.2.9 Note on Extent of Manifestation, Early Printed Resources

Abstract

This proposal recommends three changes:

1. Revise the chronological scope of the term “early printed resources” to accommodate regional differences for the concept of early.
2. Define “rare printed resources” as a category of materials for which an agency may choose to provide a more detailed description of the resource as a physical object.
3. Revise RDA instructions for “early printed resources” so that they may also be applied for “rare printed resources,” where there is no justification for limiting application to early materials.

Justification

Among its tasks for 2016, the Rare Materials Working Group was asked to examine RDA guidelines for early printed resources and propose revisions, as needed. For RDA’s usage of the term “early printed resources,” the working group identified issues described below.

Issues / changes

Issue #1: Definition of early printed resources

The RDA glossary defines early printed resources as follows.

early printed resources: Materials manufactured before the advent of machine printing in approximately 1825-1830.

The current chronological limit is correct for many Western nations; but it is not accurate for all regions. In Nordic countries, for example, the concept of early is more likely to mean before 1850. ISBD and DCRM refer to the period before the advent of machine printing in more flexible terms:

ISBD (glossary)

older monographic resource : a resource produced prior to the introduction of machine printing in the nineteenth century; includes those published for the market as well as those printed in few, or even single copies, for private or limited distribution

DCRM(B): I.4. Scope of application

DCRM(B) is especially appropriate for the description of publications produced before the introduction of machine printing in the nineteenth century ...

Change #1, below, revises the RDA definition of early printed resources, replacing “approximately 1825-1830” with “the nineteenth century.” It also modifies the definition to emphasize that the term refers to materials of the hand-press period.

Change #1: Definition of early printed resources

Marked-up version:

Glossary

early printed resources Materials manufactured during the hand-press period, before the advent of machine printing in ~~approximately 1825–1830~~ the nineteenth century.

Clean-copy version:

Glossary

early printed resources Materials manufactured during the hand-press period, before the advent of machine printing in the nineteenth century.

Issue #2: Treatment of rare materials that do not qualify as early

Many special collections libraries collect materials manufactured well after the advent of machine printing and catalog such materials in a manner consistent with rare materials description. Many of RDA's instructions for early printed resources are equally applicable to later materials that an agency chooses to treat as rare.

The working group held lively discussions on how best to resolve this issue and considered four options:

1. Leave unchanged all instructions in RDA concerning “early printed resources.” Make no attempt to broaden the scope of the pertinent RDA instructions to include materials manufactured after the advent of machine printing. If a given community (such as LC-PCC, D-A-CH, RBMS, etc.) wishes to apply instructions for early printed resources to later material, it may append policy statements with instructions to do so.
2. Remove the concept “early printed resources” from RDA, replacing it in all instances with the concept “rare printed resources.” Define “rare printed resources” as any printed materials that an agency has chosen to treat as rare, including material of the hand-press period.
3. Define two categories, “early printed resources” and “rare printed resources,” and state that “early printed resources” are a subset of “rare printed resources.” For instructions where there

is justification for limiting the scope to early material (such as sources of information, in 2.2.2.2), maintain use of the term “early printed resources.” In instructions where there is no justification for limiting application to early materials, use only the term “rare printed resources.”

4. As in option 3, define “early printed resources” and “rare printed resources” but make no statement about the relationship between the two categories of material. For instructions applicable to both categories, use both terms (i.e., “early printed resources and rare printed resources”).

Option 2 would represent oversimplification. There are several instructions that are applicable only to *early* material (e.g., the exception for sources of information in 2.2.2.2, and the treatment of printers or booksellers also acting as publishers, in 2.8-2.10); and it is conceivable that other instructions for early material may yet be added to RDA.

There is some appeal in option 3, but an important portion of our community strongly wishes to maintain the label “early printed resources” in all pertinent instructions, even where the instructions can be applied to rare material of any time period.

The working group proposes option 4. A definition of *rare printed resources* is provided in change #2, below.

Change #2: definition for rare printed resources

Marked-up version:

rare printed resources: Printed materials for which an agency chooses to provide a more detailed description of the resource as a physical object. The treatment may be applied for any reason, including, but not limited to age, rarity, fragility, or value as part of a collection.

Clean-copy version:

Glossary

rare printed resources: Printed materials for which an agency chooses to provide a more detailed description of the resource as a physical object. The treatment may be applied for any reason, including, but not limited to age, rarity, fragility, or value as part of a collection.

Issue #3: Implementation of the term “rare printed resources”

The working group believes that instructions for “early printed resources” in the following instructions or examples are rightly limited to early materials, because they respond to important differences found in material printed before the advent of the machine press. No change of label is required.

- 2.2.2.2: Sources of information for resources consisting of one or more pages ... (exception)
- 2.8.1.1: Publication statement (scope)
- 2.9.1.1: Distribution statement (scope)
- 2.10.1.1: Manufacture statement (scope)
- 7.17.1.4: Details of colour content (example)

All other instances of the term “early printed resources” in RDA should be revised to refer to “early printed resources and rare printed resources.”

For some instructions, this change of term is in addition to other changes that the working group proposes. See the following related documents:

- RSC/Rare WG/2 Revision to RDA 1.8.1 Numbers Expressed as Numerals or as Words
- RSC/Rare WG/3 Revision to RDA 3.4.5 Extent of Text
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In the two remaining instructions that refer to “early printed resources”, listed below, the change of term is the only change *currently* proposed (see changes #3 and #4, below).

- 2.15.1.1 Identifier for the Manifestation (scope)
- 3.22.1.4 Making Notes on Item-Specific Carrier Characteristics for an Early Printed Resource

The latter instruction is implicated in task 3 of the Working Group’s 2016 tasks (“Review RDA accommodation of Item attributes and relationships ...”). The WG is unable to formulate a proposal or discussion paper for task 3 at this time, but it will likely submit suggestions for additional revision to RDA 3.22 in a subsequent cycle. (The proposal for task 3 may recommend a consolidation of instructions in the manner of Option 2 of RSC/Rare WG/5 Revision to RDA 3.21.2.9 Note on Extent of Manifestation, Early Printed Resources).

Change #3: revision of 2.15 (“fingerprints” as identifiers)

Marked-up version:

2.15.1 Basic Instructions on Recording Identifiers for the Manifestation

2.15.1.1 Scope

An **identifier for the manifestation ▼** is a character string associated with a manifestation that serves to differentiate that manifestation from other manifestations.

Identifiers for manifestations include:

registered identifiers from internationally recognized schemes (e.g., ISBN, ISSN, URN)
other identifiers assigned by publishers, distributors, government publications agencies,
document clearinghouses, archives, etc., following their internally devised schemes
“fingerprints” (i.e., identifiers constructed by combining groups of characters from specified
pages of an early printed resource or rare printed resource)
music publishers’ numbers (see [2.15.2](#)) and plate numbers (see [2.15.3](#)).

[remainder of instruction omitted]

Clean-copy version:

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“fingerprints” (i.e., identifiers constructed by combining groups of characters from specified
pages of an early printed resource or rare printed resource)
music publishers’ numbers (see [2.15.2](#)) and plate numbers (see [2.15.3](#)).

[remainder of instruction omitted]

Change #4: revision of 3.22.1.4

Marked-up version:

3.22.1.4 Making Notes on Item-Specific Carrier Characteristics for an Early Printed Resource or Rare Printed Resource

For early printed resources and rare printed resources, make a note about special features of the specific item being described (e.g., rubrication, illumination, binding).

Also make a note about other item-specific carrier characteristics as instructed at [3.22.1.3](#).

[examples unchanged]

Clean-copy version:

3.22.1.4 Making Notes on Item-Specific Carrier Characteristics for an Early Printed Resource or Rare Printed Resource

For early printed resources and rare printed resources, make a note about special features of the specific item being described (e.g., rubrication, illumination, binding).

Also make a note about other item-specific carrier characteristics as instructed at [3.22.1.3](#).

[examples unchanged]

Impact of the revisions

The recommended revisions will encourage wider use of the pertinent alternatives and exceptions for early/rare materials, when appropriate, which should, in turn, lead to greater fulfillment of user tasks for users who require the specialized information enabled by the alternatives and exceptions.

Other changes in RDA

Related changes to use of the term “early printed resources” are made in the following working group proposals:

- RSC/Rare WG/2 Revision to RDA 1.8.1 Numbers Expressed as Numerals or as Words
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Changes to the RDA Element Set

No changes needed.