RDA : an alternative set of definitions to reflect the Kingston experience

Katrina Clifford & Niki Wilson, Kingston University

Over the last couple of years or so, there have been a number of 'alternative' meanings of the acronym for RDA from 'Retirement Date Approaching' to 'Really, Don't Ask'. As a result of our implementation here at Kingston, we'd like to propose our own acronym: 'Relax, Deadlines, Adjust'.

1. Relax:

KC: Firstly, Relax. Yes, it's easy to say it, quite another to actually manage it but (and I hate to use such a clichéd phrase) the world is not going to end just because you're now cataloguing in RDA. That's not to say it's not important to plan or take it seriously (more of that under deadlines) but that it's important to keep it in perspective. There were a couple of times in the run-up where I had a bit of a 'Oh my goodness, we're actually going to have to do this' moment, but they soon passed.

NW: Going to the CIG RDA Workshop in Warwick made me more relaxed about the process as everyone was saying "you just have to get on with it". I was surprised at this, I thought I would come away from the day feeling like we had a mountain to climb but instead I felt excited about the project at Kingston and my feelings didn't change much towards the run-up.

KC: Deciding we'd continue to download AACR2 records where they existed, rather than catalogue *everything* in RDA helped to ease our fears as well in terms of the workload, especially with a large number of books for a couple of the collections in our Archives & Special Collections still awaiting cataloguing.

2. Deadlines:

KC: Deadlines. Love them or loathe them, having a clear date in your head does help. At the CIG RDA pop-up event, at least 2 people said that 'setting a date' really helped them. We decided fairly early on that we *would* move to RDA, building it into both departmental and personal workplans over the last couple of years.. After many conversations that went along the lines of "So, we must set a date for RDA" - "umm, probably the autumn?…" the Collections Manager finally pressed for a date and 1st October was picked, pretty much as a reasonable first-of-the-month-date (plus it seemed a long way away). It was only later that we discovered that that was the date the Cambridge University libraries were moving, which was quite nice as it had an element of 'cataloguer solidarity' about it, knowing that there were others going through the same as us. I almost wish now I'd marked the 'RDA day' itself more as it wasn't all the fanfares & trumpets I thought it might be, in fact it was quite late in the afternoon when I actually catalogued my first book 'officially' in RDA.

NW: Being new to my job and Kingston and having only some RDA knowledge prior to starting the job meant I felt I had a lot of pre-planning and self-training to catch up on. Thankfully there is a wealth of tutorials and webinars to immerse yourself in which quickly got me up to speed and increased my confidence.

KC: Having a deadline firmly placed RDA on the agenda at departmental meetings and gave us timescales when liaising with colleagues on the technical side of things as it was a tangible 'project' rather than just a vague proposal of something we'd like to do at some point. It also stopped it getting side-lined amongst all the other things we do and gave us a sort of mental 'justification' to play around with records and read around the topic more than if it was still a 'future' thing.

3. Adjustments:

KC: Thinking about RDA, it seems less scary to view everything as 'adjustments' rather than changes. It's sort of like ordering a burger but asking them to not include the sauce, it's still a burger, just a little bit different.

There have been quite a few adjustments we've had to make, both on a technical and personal level, some of these will be the same as what you might experience, some you won't have, others you might have that we didn't.

a) Adjusting your system:

KC: It has been said many times in webinars and at training events that there may be some technical adjustments you have to make to your LMS. We certainly had to alter ours to accept the 264 field and the 337/338/339 fields as valid and also to make the 264 field to display in the public view. We're also investigating the indexing of 100 and 700 fields with the subfield e for the relationship designators in our public catalogue. This has perhaps been the most frustrating part as we'd been told our LMS was RDA 'ready' when perhaps that should have been reworded as RDA 'compatible'. It's been very interesting though to work with those who run the systems side of things and I think we've both learnt a little more about what we each do.

b) Adjusting your expectations:

NW: Getting used to the new fields and actually remembering to add them to new records took a bit of extra time initially, but now we've been doing it for almost two months I don't feel that it takes any longer than it did previously. I expected it to take much longer and have been surprised at how quick we've become used to it.

KC: The biggest adjustment I've found in terms of day-to-day cataloguing is the inclusion of relationship designators in the 100/700 fields, especially for relationships I'd not previously considered such as 'host institution' on the exhibition catalogues. Some of them I will confess I've got "wrong" once or twice until I've got my head around *exactly* what they were intended to be used for, but I don't think that's too much of a problem as it's very much a learning as you go process.

c) Helping others adjust:

NW: We took the approach here at Kingston that "less is more" in terms of training for others and have been giving quick "RDA: What It Means For You" presentations to all the teams in Library and Learning Services. The feedback has been excellent and keeping it simple means (we hope!) everyone understands the changes. The only problem has been finding time for the training amongst other commitments and has meant that it has taken place over a few months rather than weeks.

KC: At Kingston the subject teams do carry out some basic cataloguing. We made the decision not to ask them to catalogue in RDA just yet which has given us time to get up to speed with it first. The catalogue is a hybrid mix of AACR2/RDA anyway and the volume of cataloguing they do isn't vast so it won't have that much of an impact.

The support from the senior management here has been really good. RDA has always been viewed and discussed very positively and the move was built into our strategic planning. Management readily accepted that the benefits outweighed any potential 'dip' in productivity without the need for a formal business case to be written. They have also been very supportive of us attending training even well in advance of setting an actual date to move to RDA.

Final thoughts:

Overall it's been a really positive experience. We've engaged much more with the profession as a whole through attending events, taking part in webinars or just asking people questions. There's been a great deal of everyone supporting each other through it all in the cataloguing community.

Within our workplace too it's given us an 'excuse' if you like to engage with other teams, making us much more visible. Being present at team briefings and at training events has given people a greater understanding of what we do and hopefully made them more comfortable about approaching us if they do have cataloguing queries.

Whatever stage you're at with RDA, good luck and remember,

'Relax, Deadlines, Adjust'.