TO: ALA/ALCTS/CaMMS Committee on Cataloging: Description and Access

FROM: John Attig, ALA Representative to the Joint Steering Committee

SUBJECT: Report on JSC Activities, November 2011–January 2012

The following is a written version of the report of the ALA Representative to the Joint Steering Committee that was presented orally to CC:DA on January 21 and 23, 2012.

The Joint Steering Committee for Development of RDA met in Glasgow, Scotland, on November 1–4, 2011. It was a very productive meeting, and was covered in my last report. I want to highlight a few things from that meeting, and report on JSC activities since the meeting.

First, however, I want to note some personnel announcements. Barbara Tillett of the Library of Congress is now the Chair of JSC, for at least the next two years. And those of us who were shocked and appalled to learn that Judy Kuhagen was retiring are no doubt pleased to learn that she will be serving as the JSC secretary.

Last fall the Committee of Principals extended an invitation to the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek to become a full member of the JSC. The invitation was promptly accepted; their representative will be Christine Frodl. As she had already planned to attend the meeting as an observer, she was able to participate at a member in Glasgow.

The discussion of the proposals at the JSC meeting went very efficiently. I think that the JSC was relieved to be dealing with discrete proposals, rather than the entire code. I won't go over everything, but I do want to summarize where things stand on the four ALA proposals, some of which require some follow-up action.

- **6JSC/ALA/1: Reports of a court** – This was approved with minor wording changes; the final version has been sent to the publishers.

- **6JSC/ALA/2: Heads of state and heads of government** – ALA had recommended that these headings be based on the language of the jurisdiction. The other JSC constituencies preferred that they be based on the language of preferred by the agency creating the data. The CC:DA Task Force and I put together a revised proposal; this raised some issues on which the JSC had not made a decision, and these still need to be discussed and decided. If we can reach consensus quickly these revisions will be included in the April update to RDA.

- **6JSC/ALA/3: Affiliation** –- The JSC did not approve this proposal. I believe that they will be raising this issue with the FRBR Review Group. In the meantime, notes describing affiliation may be recorded in the Biographical Information element, and formal links to the affiliated corporate body can be made using the authorized access point and an appropriate relationship designator from Appendix K. The JSC confirms that they will accept proposals for additions to Appendix K – indeed to all the lists of relationship designators.

- **6JSC/ALA/4: Technical and/or Artistic Credits** – The JSC decided to extend the use of this element to sound recordings and multimedia resources, but not to all resources. I drafted a revised proposal; there are still some issues that the JSC needs to resolve. If those issues are resolved quickly, this revision will be included in the April update. Beyond this, the JSC would like to reconsider the present situation in which some statements of responsibility are transcribed from the sources and others (performers and credits) are recorded as notes. This was also an issue for the ISBD Review Group, because ISBD considers all of these to be transcribed statements of responsibility. ALA was invited to prepare a discussion paper and/or recommendations on this issue.

The JSC held a joint meeting with members of the ISBD Review Group. It was a fruitful discussion, identifying issues that are seen as conflicts between ISBD and RDA. The goal was to achieve a "functional level of interoperability" that would allow records created under each of the standards to be used by the others. The groups also agreed to work towards a mapping of ISBD and RDA elements. One positive outcome from the point of view of the Review Group was confirmation from the JSC that the ISBD section of Appendix D could be expanded to include additional mandatory/optional requirements, as well as notes indicating such things as not applying certain RDA alternative instructions when creating an ISBD-compatible record. On other issues, the Review Group agreed to make proposals to the JSC, and the JSC indicated that they had some proposals to make to the Review Group.

There were also discussions involving the ISBD Review Group and representatives from the ISSN Network. These sought to update the harmonization agreement made when Chapter 12 of AACR2 was being revised. Here the goal was that the same number of records would be made when applying any of the standards; therefore the instructions on when to create a new record the focus of the discussion. The major unresolved issue had to do with descriptions for integrating resources. The ISSN Network considers each iteration with a different title as a distinct resource and assigns a new ISSN; they apply the same rules on title changes to all continuing resources. This is going to be a difficult issue to resolve, as it is unlikely that the JSC constituencies would be willing to follow this practice.

This was an important first meeting of these three groups; I believe that everybody felt that this was an important discussion which ought to continue. The JSC is also interested in establishing a similar working relationship with the FRBR Review Group.

One of the major topics the JSC dealt with in executive session was to update our plans for responding to the recommendations of the US RDA Test Coordinating Committee. There are two documents (a summary and a detailed plan) available on the JSC website; these have been updated since the Glasgow meeting.

The major recommendation of the Coordinating Committee was to reword RDA instructions "in clear, unambiguous, plain English". This process is being managed by ALA Publishing. I want to highlight how the JSC has been participating. A copy editor was hired by ALA: Chris Oliver of McGill University. It was agreed that five chapters would be reworded during the next six months: Chapters 9 (Persons), 10 (Families) and 11 (Corporate Bodies) plus Chapter 6 (works and expressions) and 17 (primary relationships). Chris has now completed her rewording of

chapters 9 and 10; the JSC has reviewed Chapter 9 and the Coordinating Committee will shortly be reviewing it. The JSC has started work on Chapter 10.

The results are interesting. The goal is to improve the readability of the text without changing the meaning of the instructions. At least in part, readability is judged by standard tests that rely particularly on the average number of words per sentence. Therefore much of Chris's work consisted of breaking up sentences into two or more separate sentences. The question that the JSC discussed was whether this in fact changed the meaning of the instructions. In addition to shortening sentences, another technique Chris proposed was to use numbered lists for complex statements of the scope of an instruction. This may not shorten the sentences, but it does allow you to read each item one at a time and thus the result is more readable.

These five chapters are to be completed (including final JSC approval) by June. In addition to these chapters, Chris has been compiling a list of "recurring phrases"; these not only occur multiple times in a given chapter, but may occur throughout RDA. When there is a rewording of a recurring phrase, all occurrences will be revised. Therefore, the first set of reworded chapters will also contain additional rewordings throughout. That will provide a good start towards rewording the remaining chapters.

Another recommendation from the Coordinating Committee was to complete the registry of RDA element sets and vocabularies in RDF/SKOS format in the RDAvocab namespace on the Open Metadata Registry. This task was begun last summer with the publication a miscellaneous collection of vocabularies. Just last week we reached another milestone, when the vocabularies for Carrier Type, Content Type, and Media Type were updated to "published" status. This is particularly significant, as these are the vocabularies that are based on the RDA/ONIX Framework and support the categorization of bibliographic resources. We are particularly pleased to make these vocabularies available in the RDA namespace, and hope that they will be of interest to the wider semantic Web community.

The remaining vocabularies will be published as soon as they are approved by the JSC. There are a few technical issues that must be dealt with, but the main need is to provide definitions for all the terms. Gordon Dunsire has been reminding us that definitions are a vital part of any registered vocabulary. You cannot use an entity unless you know what it is; you cannot map entities unless they have comparable definitions. You cannot rely on the names or labels for this. You need definitions. Therefore, the JSC has agreed that we will not publish terms until they have definitions. This is now a priority; we want to get these things published. I am hoping that CC:DA members and the organizations they represent will contribute to this effort.

In addition to the vocabularies, the JSC will shortly begin work on finalizing and publishing the element sets.

Another recommendation from the Coordinating Committee was to provide more complete examples. The JSC will be revising the existing set of full examples, and these will soon be available as resources in the Toolkit (no subscription required). The JSC will also establish a new Examples Working Group to provide recommendations on the examples in the text of proposed revisions to RDA, and to develop procedures for expanding the number and coverage

of the complete examples. The charge will be issued soon, and the JSC is now seeking members for the group.

The report of the Test Coordinating Committee included a number of specific recommendations. A few of those were dealt with in Glasgow based on proposals from various JSC constituencies. Others are awaiting receipt of proposals. The JSC needs to remind everyone that we cannot act without a proposal, and that we are no longer in a position to initiate ourselves all of the revisions that may be needed. During the development of RDA, it was decided that this would only work if the JSC itself developed the content, and an editor was hired to do the work. Once RDA was published, the editor was discharged with our thanks. We must therefore once again depend on the users of RDA to initiate proposals for needed revisions; there are procedures for submitting such proposals, and I and CC:DA members are available to help individuals and groups formulate proposals.

On the other hand, the JSC was also interested in instituting a less formal procedure that could deal with minor revisions, such as correction of errors in the text, additions and changes to the examples in the text, and additions and changes to the lists of relationship designators. This Fast Track process was begun this month, with a large number of proposals from LC that resulted from comments by the US RDA test participants. The Fast Track process is designed to work primarily through email correspondence and a page on the JSC wiki for indicating agreement or disagreement. It is expected that the participants in this decision-making process will be the JSC members, who will be responsible for determining what consultation with their constituency groups is necessary.

The JSC and ALA Publishing have agreed that there will be no more than two substantive updates per year, released (at least in 2012) in April and October; Fast Track revisions can be included in the monthly releases of the RDA Toolkit, which thus may include both software and minor content changes. The changes in a substantive update will be listed and marked in the Toolkit, and a history of versions will be provided. There will only be one update to the printed RDA per year, so the print product will not be completely in synch.

The JSC will be meeting once a year, probably in October; the 2012 meeting will be in the Washington, DC, area. The deadline for proposals for that meeting will most likely be in early August. On the other hand, the deadline for proposals to be included the RDA update to be published in October will probably be around April. That will be our next deadline for submitting proposals. However, because of the amount of effort the JSC is putting into other activities (particularly the rewording effort), it is anticipated that there will not be a large number of proposals considered for the October update, and in fact it may be decided that it is not worth issuing such an update. More information will be provided as it becomes available. Once this schedule has been confirmed and precise dates given for the next year's work, CC:DA will be in a position to plan how and when to deal with the work that it has on its plate.

That is my report on the Glasgow meeting as well as other activities that have been going on since last November. In addition, I submitted two documents to CC:DA for their consideration.

The first document is a proposal to deal with an issue that ALA identified in its response to the proposal dealing with dates of treaties. We noted that it is not unusual for multiple treaties to be signed between the same parties on the same day, and that RDA does not provide instructions for distinguishing them.   There is an LCPS that deals with this, and my proposal essentially turns the LCPS into RDA instructions. [Post-ALA note: CC:DA approved the proposal with some verbal changes.]

The second document is the description of what I believe to be a gap in the RDA instructions. There are no instructions on how to record a structured description of a relationship, such as accompanying materials or contents. I described the situation and made some assertions to serve as the basis for discussion. The paper asks whether CC:DA wishes to investigate this issue. [Post-ALA note: CC:DA voted to form a Task Force.]