
JONES, Ed. *RDA and serials cataloguing*. London: Facet. 2013. 236 pages. ISBN-13 978 1 85604 950 4. £49.95.

Let's face it, the best you can hope for when reviewing a book on a cataloguing topic is that the item is accurate and not too boring. Ed Jones has proved a delightful exception to this experience! The author combines immense knowledge with a quirky sense of humour (which I like – see if you can detect the Monty Python examples!) to produce an excellent manual for a traditionally complex area of work. The edition to hand is the Facet version, which seems to vary from the ALA version only by the use of the term “cataloguing” in the title (for example, on the cover and title page). Throughout the text the American spelling “cataloging” is used, even the advert following the index is full-on ALA – despite some of the titles included being available via the Facet imprint.

Jones defines his area of work clearly in his introduction: “This manual provides an introduction to Resource Description and Access (RDA) as it applies to the cataloging of serials and ongoing integrating resources “ (p.vii). The book is for both time-served old school serials cataloguers and those wishing to expand their skill base by working with serials. He reasonably assumes some knowledge of MARC 21 and AACR2 and some knowledge of CONSER.

The book is divided into two sections: Part 1: Preparation and Part 2: Serials cataloging using RDA. The first chapter of Part 1 provides a very useful introduction to serials cataloguing that provides an excellent review for anyone new to the area or a highly readable refresher for those who think they know their way round. This is followed by a brief chapter “Getting to know RDA” which outlines the structure of RDA and also highlights major differences between RDA and AACR2.

Part 2 opens with a chapter on searching for serial records. The author's approach is evident in the opening sentences:

“The first step in cataloging a serial is praying that someone else has already catalogued it. The prayer is short, and each religion has its own variation. There are believed to be versions for agnostics and atheists, though this may be more legend than fact. Most cataloging departments are tolerant of their serials catalogers mumbling the Prayer of the Serials Cataloger from time to time throughout the day. Some provide a special room.” (p.45).

The reference to “ISSN centers” (p.46) details North American practice rather than this side of the pond where the British Library or the National Library of Ireland would be appropriate. The strategy given for searching for serial titles (p.48) is very helpful and will potentially save the beginner from the more painful part of that particular learning curve!

Chapter 4 is what the author terms “the meat” of the volume and occupies over 65% of the text, 144 pages! This may sound excessive; however, our intrepid author masterfully combines RDA with ISBD, MARC 21 and references to AACR2 and other cataloguing rules, which is a truly formidable task to undertake! There is an inherent tension between the RDA sequence and that of MARC 21: the author keeps with RDA, which leads to a disjointed MARC

sequence – as the book is about RDA and MARC 21 has a finite life, this is bound to happen.

The author reasonably expects some knowledge of AACR2 and MARC 21 and uses the OCLC template to build the description. He details the MARC 21 leader and control field 008, which are not RDA concerns. He deals with the vexed issues of changes to title in “The Nasty Details (Serials): Major and Minor Changes in the Title Proper” (p.61). He then deals with the attributes of resources in ISBD (International Standard Bibliographical Description) order. A minor gripe is that sequencing could have been more clearly identified by numbering sections and subsections within the chapter. However, there is a very useful index that allows you to find specific topics. The consistent internal structure of each section with useful examples more than compensates in terms of quality content.

He then proceeds to review relationships between resources (p.126) an awkward area given there are a series of “RDA scenarios” to consider and only the MARC format currently available! He proceeds to detail identifying works and expressions (p.135) and identifying related entities (p.152). The sections on online serials and CONSER provider-neutral records (p.168) and ongoing integrating resources (p.177) complete this chapter. The focus remains on the practical cataloguing throughout and the detailed annotated examples given in this chapter further illustrate this quality.

The Epilogue (RDA and linked data) is a brave attempt to hint at the possible future. He prefaces his comments with reference to a paper produced by Charles Cutter (1837 – 1903) for the ALA conference in 1883, where Cutter tries to predict what library land will look like in 1983. Cutter’s vision is well wide of the mark yet reflects the assumptions sensibly built on the emerging technologies of the time. A very wise caveat to include given the high level of uncertainty surrounding the codification of data in the post MARC era! Having reviewed linked data in broad terms he includes a mention of the Bibliographic framework Initiative (BIBFRAME). I concur with his comment “we are embarked on a daring but necessary voyage from a known but increasingly frail old world to a brave new world full of hope but whose contours currently must remain vague and uncertain” (p.202).

Ed Jones has produced an excellent manual both in terms of the area it covers, the quality of the index, the level of detail provided and the way the book is written with the personality of the writer present in both his text and examples. This book will provide a secure grounding for the cataloguer moving into this area of work (or a student of cataloguing) or a bench book for a time-served serials cataloguer. The limit with all printed books of this type is the instability of the rule set they are based on (RDA), the possible move away from the MARC format and the general changes in the supporting technology which all speed up the redundancy of elements of the current content. In this I can but echo the author’s potentially ambivalent closing sentence referencing both Shakespeare’s play *The Tempest* and Aldous Huxley’s novel: “A brave new world indeed” (p.204).

Keith Trickey
Lead Trainer, Sherrington Sanders