MassCat Musings - February 2014
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The Cataloging Rules are Changing

The *Anglo-American Cataloging Rules* (AACR2) were published in 1978 and adopted by the Library of Congress (and most other libraries) in 1981. Most of the materials we find in our libraries were cataloged using AACR2, so most of the bibliographic records we see in our OPACs are in that format.

However, a lot has changed since 1978 including the materials available to library patrons: computer software, ebooks, downloadable audio files and all sorts of other things. As technology changes exponentially, who knows what changes we'll see in the next few years?

To better describe these current new materials and to allow for the ones we can't yet imagine, several national libraries and library organizations gathered together and developed a new set of cataloging rules called RDA or *Resource Description and Access*. RDA was published in 2010 and became the official cataloging standard for the Library of Congress on March 31, 2013. Many other libraries are already using RDA exclusively while others are planning to adopt it in the near future.

What does this mean for MassCat libraries? Not much right now. Bibliographic records created using RDA look very much like bibliographic records created using AACR2. There are some differences, though.

The first is that GMDs (General Material Designations) are not used in RDA records. GMDs are the words and phrases in brackets that immediately follow the title of non-book materials such as [videorecording], [sound recording], or [electronic resource]. Instead, there are three new phrases (content type, media type, and carrier type) that are used for ALL materials including books. To see an example, look for the title *Daddy's gone a hunting* by Mary Higgins Clark (ISBNs 9781451668940 and 9781410455987). The purpose of these phrases, which are more detailed than a GMD, is so that our online catalogs can display an icon or some other visual cue making it easier for our patrons (and us) to find the format needed: ebook, book on CD, large print book, etc.

However, since RDA implementation is relatively new, OPAC vendors and the Open Source community have not yet developed products that take advantage of this feature.

Other changes to notice include the spelling out of most words: pages not p., illustrations not ill. Instead of the Latin abbreviations "s.l."(which means no place) and "s.n." (which means no name), you will see the phrases "Place not identified" and "Publisher not identified".

I'll talk more about RDA in future newsletters. In the meantime, notice the changes I've pointed out, but don't be too worried. Both RDA and our online catalogs are evolving to make the most of new technologies.