

# RDA in Israel

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Israeli cataloging has traditionally followed American standards, with the exception of vernacular cataloging for Hebrew, Arabic and Cyrillic scripts. Each change in American rules has led to the need to adjust Israeli cataloging standards accordingly. The Library of Congress decision to implement RDA in April 2013 led to the conclusion that the Israeli libraries had no choice but to adopt also RDA. The Israeli Inter-University Cataloging Committee held several meetings in 2012 and 2013 regarding the implications of RDA. This article summarizes the unique issues of Israeli cataloging, the preparations for adjusting them to RDA and for nation-wide implementation.

**KEYWORDS:** Resource Description and Access (RDA), cataloging, Israel

## **The Israeli cataloging tradition**

Professional librarianship in Israel (then Mandatory Palestine) began in the 1920s when the the Bnai Brith Library in Jerusalem was merged into the newly founded Hebrew University of Jerusalem, creating the Jewish National and University Library (JNUL). With the founding of the State of Israel in 1948, the JNUL became also the de-facto national library of Israel, although it became so de-jure only in 2007 with the passage of the National Library Law by the Israeli parliament (Knesset). The library is now independent of the Hebrew University and its name has changed to the National Library of Israel (NLI).<sup>1</sup>

As the first academic library in Israel, the JNUL set many of the national professional standards and traditions, and when the country's first academic school of librarianship was established by the Hebrew University in 1956 it was housed for a large part of its history in the JNUL. It was natural therefore that many of the national practices were started by the JNUL and subsequently copied by newer libraries of all types.

Many members of the initial faculty and staff of the Hebrew University were German-born academics and the university was in many ways modeled on German universities of the time. While many of the JNUL's practices (scholar-librarians, closed shelves, classified catalog) were also copied from German universities, its descriptive cataloging traditions were American from the start.<sup>2</sup> With the passage of time, professional leadership in Israeli libraries moved to other, more recently established institutions (which also brought in additional aspects of American academic librarianship (open-shelf collections, subject headings, Library of Congress Classification and Library of Congress Subject Headings). The one professional area which always was and continues to be linked to American standards and traditions, from the card catalog to the OPAC, is descriptive cataloging.

While Israeli cataloging does, in general, follow American practices, there are major differences between the approaches of the two countries regarding cataloging of vernacular (Hebrew script) materials and some Judaica materials.<sup>3</sup>

The traditional American approach has been to romanize all non-Roman scripts, creating a single uniform bibliographic file (card and later computer). While many American Judaica libraries now selectively enhance their records with additional vernacular script elements (MARC 880 fields) the core data was always romanized. The Israeli approach, like those of other countries with national non-Roman scripts, has been to catalog in the vernacular only, allowing catalog users to search in the original script and avoiding problems of inconsistent romanization (there are multiple schemes for romanizing Hebrew and they are all

dependent on pronunciation which varies with different communities). Israeli libraries have always maintained separate Hebrew script catalogs in which the reader can search and retrieve using the original script and without requiring the use of complex and often unfamiliar romanization rules. Similarly, Israeli libraries with Arabic script collections create Arabic script records, and many (but not all) of the libraries with significant Russian collections create Cyrillic script records. With the move from the card catalog to the computer, these are no longer separate catalogs, however the scripts do create separate sections in alphabetic browsing (Cyrillic following Latin, followed by Hebrew and Arabic). Thus, Israeli libraries have at least two, possibly three or four 'languages of cataloging'.

Since the Israeli descriptive cataloging traditions were American, for Israeli Roman script cataloging, the language of cataloging has always been English. Israeli libraries have continued to follow American cataloging standards, from the American Library Association and Library of Congress rules of 1949, through both editions of the Anglo-American Cataloging Rules. Copy cataloging has also been primarily from Library of Congress data, and more recently OCLC Worldcat. For Hebrew cataloging, the American rules were adapted to Hebrew script in a series of Hebrew cataloging manuals, with standardized Hebrew abbreviations, notes, General Material Designations (GMDs), etc. and with special practices for dealing with unique Hebrew issues such as inconsistent orthography. While there are no specific local manuals for Arabic and Cyrillic script cataloging, these have been done generally with the same approach.

Even in English language cataloging there are several differences between American and Israeli practice. Some (but not all) Israeli libraries follow the romanization table of the Academy of the Hebrew language which differs significantly from the Library of Congress table. The headings for many "anonymous classic" Judaica works differ from American headings, particularly for the Bible.<sup>4</sup>

In computerized bibliographic standards the Israeli academic libraries have also followed American standards. After using local coding schemes in their first generation systems, the academic libraries now follow standard MARC-21 in their Ex-Libris ALEPH-based catalogs.<sup>5</sup> The fact that Ex-Libris is an Israeli company has been beneficial for the Israeli libraries in their understanding and addressing issues such as bidirectional display and suppression of non-filing characters. In Hebrew, the article is often an additional letter at the beginning of a word and not an independent word. Aleph can be configured to employ angled brackets (<<>>), rather than indicators, to suppress articles. This allows suppression of the initial article in field 246, where no indicator is available for this function and in transliterated Hebrew access points. The metadata is therefore more accurate.

#### **Standard setting: The Inter-University Committee on Cataloging**

The Standing Committee of the National and University Libraries on October 19, 1983, decided to establish a cataloging and retro-conversion subcommittee. The new subcommittee's chief purpose was to deal with matters relating to the cataloging of books and other non-book materials, especially those that dealt with computerized cataloging, but not periodicals (which were dealt with by a separate subcommittee).<sup>6</sup> They were empowered to make policy decisions for all the academic libraries regarding the conversion of catalog cards to a computerized format, which would one day enable the creation of an online national union catalog.<sup>7</sup> The subcommittee was requested to create a set of cataloging standards acceptable to the various libraries. The standards were to relate to cataloging rules, level of detail contained in the records, romanization rules and Hebrew orthography.<sup>8</sup> The goal of standardizing cataloging practice was to enable cooperative cataloging.

The subcommittee met on a regular basis and recommended policy regarding the above mentioned topics. However, as the cataloging environment and technologies changed, the

subcommittee was forced to deal with additional topics. It has, since 1999, also made national decisions concerning the adoption of USMARC (subsequently MARC21) as an encoding standard. Most Israeli academic libraries converted their on line cataloging records from an alphabetic coding format (AU = author, TL = title, etc.) to a partial MARC format (without leaders and control fields) in 1999-2002. Full adoption of MARC-21 was only possible in 2004-5 with the migration to Ex Libris' Aleph 500 integrated library system. An additional topic of discussion was how to best catalog new physical and electronic formats, in general and in particular in Hebrew. The subcommittee discussed and shared information, making recommendations when necessary. It was only natural that the Inter-University Committee on Cataloging should be the body responsible for making the decisions regarding implementation of RDA.

#### **RDA: to wait or to adopt?**

The topic of RDA was first presented to the subcommittee in July 2010. Elhanan Adler presented a brief introduction to RDA. Basing himself on various presentations by Adam Schiff, Principal Cataloger of the University of Washington Libraries, Elhanan explained some of the differences between AACR2 and RDA, as they are being encoded in MARC-21. At that time it was decided to take "wait and see" position.<sup>9</sup> The main rationale being, that the Library of Congress, the National Library of Medicine, and the National Agricultural Library were about to begin testing to assure the operational, technical, and economic feasibility of RDA.<sup>10</sup>

The subcommittee revisited RDA in October 2012. The Library of Congress had posted their RDA training plan:

"RDA LC Implementation Date" is defined as "the date when all catalog records newly created at LC will be produced according to RDA instructions." The Library's Acquisitions & Bibliographic Access Directorate (ABA) has set this date as March 31,

2013, by which date all LC catalogers must have completed RDA training. LC's partner national libraries (National Agricultural Library and National Library of Medicine; and British Library, Library & Archives Canada, Deutsche Nationalbibliothek (DNB), and National Library of Australia) have been apprised of LC's plans and — with the exception of DNB, which plans to implement in mid-2013 — also plan to target the first quarter of 2013 as their RDA implementation date.<sup>11</sup>

By the October 2012 meeting it was clear to the subcommittee that the transition from AACR2 to RDA was inevitable. It was decided that a letter should be sent to the Standing Committee of the National and University Libraries informing them of the subcommittee's intention.<sup>12</sup> The letter contained the following rationale and plans:

1. The present cataloging rules, AACR2, no longer provide the means for proper description and retrieval of all resources being cataloged by the academic libraries.
2. The American national libraries as well as other leading libraries in the world have chosen to implement RDA.
3. More and more records in OCLC WorldCat will be catalogued according to RDA. If these records would have to be converted to AACR2, the benefit of copy cataloging would be lost.
4. Due to the fact that the RDA guidelines are still being amended, the subcommittee recommends waiting until at least the summer of 2013 to begin original Latin script cataloging. Hebrew script original cataloging depends on translations of various terms and various policy decisions which will need to be made. Therefore it is recommended that original Hebrew RDA records begin no earlier than the autumn of 2013.
5. A subcommittee on RDA was established in order to facilitate the transition to RDA. The subcommittee includes catalogers and systems administrators.

#### **Implementation of RDA in Israel: Stage 1**

The National Cataloging Subcommittee decided to implement RDA in three stages. The first stage would be the incorporation of RDA bibliographic and authority records copied from OCLC WorldCat. The second stage would consist of "training the trainers" sessions, formulating national policy and translating needed terms into Hebrew, Arabic and Russian. The third stage would comprise training the catalogers in the local libraries and the creation of RDA original records. It was suggested that libraries gain experience by cataloging Latin script publications. Creation of Hebrew and other script records and records for non-book formats would follow. NLI, the major Israeli university libraries and most of the college libraries use Ex Libris' Aleph 500 as their ILS system. The fact that all these institutions use the same system facilitated the reconfiguration of the tables necessary to accommodate the RDA data.

The information regarding which fields needed redefining and how to define those fields came from documents created by the British Library. As one of the partners in the Joint Steering Committee for Development of RDA and an Aleph-500 site, the British Library had already dealt with reconfiguration issues in Aleph. The British Library sent more than 30 documents, one for each new field, to NLI. The Israeli subcommittee on RDA met a number of times to review the documents and make changes where necessary. The documents were then posted on a site hosted by the National Library. Two systems librarians, one from Malmad, the Inter-University Center for Digital Information Services, and the other from the National Library, merged all the changes into two documents, one for bibliographic fields, and the other for authority fields. These documents were then made available to all interested libraries.

The Aleph GUI client installed in Israeli institutions allows the user to choose an English or Hebrew interface. The name tags of the fields appear in Hebrew on the Hebrew interface. It was therefore necessary to provide the systems librarians with Hebrew translations of the new RDA fields. After some online discussion, the RDA subcommittee prepared a list of translations which was accepted by everyone.

In order to complete stage 1, it was necessary to prepare a document containing specific instructions for catalogers how to modify RDA records imported via the OCLC Connexion client.

The catalogers were directed to accept the new RDA bibliographic and authority records without making changes. Since none of the staff had yet been trained in RDA, it was necessary to specify certain guidelines. The catalogers were to verify that the LDR and 040 fields were encoded correctly. The relationship designators in the 1xx and 7xx fields were not to be deleted and if missing were to be added. If the title in the 245 field was transcribed as it appeared on the resource, it was not to be changed, even if it was not in accordance with the AACR2 capitalization and punctuation rules. The statement of responsibility was to be left unchanged, even when it did not conform to the "rule of three". Since abbreviations in the 250 and 300 fields were now spelled out, the catalogers were instructed not to re-abbreviate the terms. The document contained a brief explanation of the 264, 336, 337 and 338 fields. The adding of access points was left to the discretion of the cataloger and in accordance with policy set by the local libraries.

The subcommittee decided to deviate from the RDA policy and to continue using the GMD (General Material Designation) subfields for the interim. In Israel, the original AACR2 list had been expanded to include additional types of material (such as journals) and continued



display of GMDs in alphabetic browse indexes was desired. The GMD was also still needed to create facets displayed in some library discovery tools. This decision was later cancelled and records created according to RDA do not contain GMDs.

## **Implementation of RDA in Israel: Stage 2**

The next stage in the implementation of RDA in Israel was to hold a course for training the trainers. Since there were no RDA experts in Israel, the NLI and the subcommittee decided to invite an expert from abroad. We were delighted when Adam Schiff, an experienced RDA trainer, accepted this invitation. This proved to be an excellent choice. The chemistry between Adam and the participants contributed greatly to the success of the course.

The course was held in Jerusalem, August 4-12, 2013 at the NLI. Forty people participated, mainly heads of cataloging departments at their respective academic libraries. The course was very intensive. It was originally intended that the morning sessions would be face-to-face classes, followed by afternoon hands-on training. Due to the amount of material needed to be covered in such a short time, most of the hands-on sessions, did not take place.

The curriculum was as follows:

Day 1: FRBR, FRAD, and RDA Toolkit

Day 2: Authorities: Persons and Families

Day 3: Authorities: Corporate Bodies and Works/Expressions

Day 4: Bibliographic: Manifestations and Items; Describing Carriers and Identifying Works

Day 5: Bibliographic: Identifying Expressions and Describing Content; Relationships

Day 6: Serials

## Day 7: Music

Prior to the course, Adam sent copies of all training materials. He included many materials that he knew would not be covered in the course but considered important for the Israeli catalogers. NLI created a web page with links to all power point presentations and documents.<sup>13</sup>

### **Translations**

Translation of the RDA Toolkit into Hebrew was never an option. In any case the majority of catalogers employed by academic institutions have a working knowledge of English.

RDA has introduced new terminology into the cataloging environment. Some of these terms, such as "core element" and "access points" have been translated as they are needed to teach RDA. The terms used in cataloging records were also translated.

Preparing for RDA was also a propitious time for creating a new compilation of Israeli cataloging practice. Elhanan Adler and Rochelle Kedar, two of the three authors of the previous AACR2-based manual<sup>14</sup>, undertook to prepare a new general cataloging manual based on RDA. The new Hebrew work, titled 'Omanut ha-kitlug' (The art of cataloging) is an open-access work, hosted by the NLI. Initial drafts of most of the chapters have already been made accessible<sup>15</sup> and the work should be completed by mid- 2014.

As mentioned above, the Israeli practice of cataloging non-Roman script resources in the vernacular necessitates translating various terms into Hebrew, Arabic and Russian. To date, the entire list of relationship designators have been translated into Hebrew. The completed translation tables are available online as Appendix B<sup>16</sup> of the above-mentioned cataloging manual.

After ascertaining that the relationship designators had not been translated into Arabic, Haifa University and NLI took on the task. The Arabic translation is now nearly complete. This is also the case with the Russian translation. It was decided to selectively translate the designators into Russian in accordance with cataloging needs.

The terminology employed in MARC field 260 was also discussed. Just as English language cataloging used the abbreviations [S.l.] and [s.n.] to indicate that the place of publication and publisher were unknown, abbreviations in Hebrew language cataloging were also utilized. The subcommittee considered the Hebrew equivalents for standard terminology such as [Place of publication not identified], etc. and decided on appropriate Hebrew translations, even if not exact translation (for example 'lo-yadu'a' (unknown) was considered a more comprehensible translation than the literal 'lo-mzuheh (unidentified)).

### **National Policy Decisions**

The RDA subcommittee prepared a list of recommendations that was presented before the Inter-University Committee on Cataloging in January 2014. The document was approved, with the stipulation that more examples be inserted.<sup>17</sup>

These recommendations were based largely on the LC-PCC policy statements. In some cases the subcommittee recommended following LC-PCC, while in others a different national "best practice" was suggested. Major topics in these recommendations are core elements for bibliographic and authority records, and, of course, special adaptations for non-Roman cataloging.

The following are a few examples of some of the issues discussed and which appear in the list of recommendations.

One of the core elements is the identifier of the manifestation (RDA 2.15). Many Israeli publications, especially those published in Hebrew, have a unique identifier assigned by D.A.N.A. Systems, the danacode. The document recommended that this identifier always be added, when present on the resource.

Regarding the recording of the statement of responsibility, the subcommittee recommended that the information be transcribed as it appears on the chief source of information, changing only the punctuation and capitalization, but not abridging it.

The publication data elements were also discussed. It was decided that the copyright date would always be transcribed in those cases where the date of publication, distribution or manufacture were not present on the resource. The entire subcommittee agreed that it was not sufficient to supply an assumed date of publication based on the presence of the copyright date. It was important for the catalogers and end users to know that the assumed date of publication was based on the copyright date.

Much work was invested in creating a list of relationship designators with translations into Hebrew, Arabic and Russian. All of these languages have male and female forms for the relator terms. Some of the Israeli academic libraries had already been employing gender appropriate relator terms, especially for audio visual materials. Nonetheless, it was decided that RDA records would contain only masculine form terms.

The decision to use only the masculine form also was applied to the date of death in Hebrew access points. According to the current (2013) instructions in the RDA Toolkit, the date of death is preceded by a hyphen. Due to issues of bidirectional display, the hyphen is not always displayed in the proper location. One of the changes approved by the Joint Steering Committee for Development of RDA in the February 25<sup>th</sup> 2014 update provides that "If a date of death is not preceded by a date of birth, precede the date of death by a hyphen or by the word died".<sup>18</sup> The Hebrew translation for "died" has a male form, niftar and a female form, nifterah. Here too, it was decided that only the male form would be used.

## **Future issues**

Theoretical and practical preparations for RDA should be completed by early 2014.

Individual institutions will then begin intensive local training and it is expected that most will be cataloging entirely according to RDA by summer 2014. The subcommittee on RDA will continue to monitor progress and address issues which may arise in actual implementation.

Some thought has been given to retrospective upgrading of legacy records (particularly dropping GMDs in favor of 336/337/338 fields, as envisioned by OCLC WorldCat). At this time, the ULI National Union Catalog accepts both RDA and AACR2 records as-is.

## **Summary and conclusions**

Israeli academic libraries are about to adopt RDA as their new cataloging standard (non-academic libraries will presumably follow). The process of preparing for RDA and adapting local practice has been a cooperative one, involving most of the academic libraries. At the time of writing in-house training is still going on in many libraries. There is some concern regarding the loss of the GMD which creates some difficulty in identifying media types between RDA and pre-RDA records. In general the move to RDA is being accepted by the rank and file catalogers as inevitable due to the libraries' dependence on American bibliographic data. The move to RDA has positive benefits for Israeli cataloging as the process itself has led to much more national cooperation than existed previously. In this

way, the planning and implementation process has brought Israeli libraries closer to the standardization and coordination originally envisioned in the creation of the Inter-University Committee on Cataloging thirty years before.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> For a brief history and description of the JNUL/NLI see:

<http://web.nli.org.il/sites/NLI/English/library/aboutus/renewal/Pages/nli--renewal-vision.aspx>

<sup>2</sup> For a discussion of the contrast and clashes between German and American library traditions at the early JNUL see Sever, Shmuel. Library development in Israel. Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Chicago, 1975, particularly pp. 45-51 and pp. 197-201.

<sup>3</sup> For a detailed description of the differences between American and Israeli cataloging traditions, see: Lazinger, Susan and Elhanan Adler. Cataloging Hebrew materials in the online environment: a comparative study of American and Israeli approaches. Englewood, Co. : Libraries Unlimited, 1998. pp. 11-114.

<sup>4</sup> In Israeli practice the heading "Bible" is used exclusively for the Jewish or "Hebrew" Bible. The New Testament and Apocrypha are treated as independent works.

<sup>5</sup> The Israeli library data files matured along with the Ex-Libris ALEPH systems which they have used. The first versions of ALEPH were non-MARC, but as ALEPH development was driven by the international market, Israeli libraries had no choice but to adopt the international standards which ALEPH now follows.

<sup>6</sup> Unpublished correspondence from Nurit Roitberg to Elhanan Adler, dated November 28, 1983.

<sup>7</sup> ULI – The Union list of Israel was set up in 1997.

<sup>8</sup> Unpublished correspondence from Nurit Roitberg to Elhanan Adler, dated October 31, 1984.

<sup>9</sup> Inter-University Committee on Cataloging, "Protocol of the meeting of July 14, 2010" (in Hebrew), [http://web.nli.org.il/sites/NLI/Hebrew/infochannels/librarians/cataloging\\_committee/Documents/catcom/catcom20100710.doc](http://web.nli.org.il/sites/NLI/Hebrew/infochannels/librarians/cataloging_committee/Documents/catcom/catcom20100710.doc)

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<sup>10</sup> Library of Congress, Testing Resource Description and Access (RDA),  
<http://www.loc.gov/bibliographic-future/rda/about.html>

<sup>11</sup> Library of Congress, RDA Training Plan for 2012 - March 30, 2013 (Updated June 15, 2012),  
[http://www.loc.gov/aba/rda/pdf/RDA\\_Long-Range\\_Training\\_Plan.pdf](http://www.loc.gov/aba/rda/pdf/RDA_Long-Range_Training_Plan.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> Inter-University Committee on Cataloging, "Protocol of the meeting of October 10, 2012" (in Hebrew),

[http://web.nli.org.il/sites/NLI/Hebrew/infochannels/librarians/cataloging\\_committee/Documents/catalogcom/Protocol-27-02-2012-rev.docx](http://web.nli.org.il/sites/NLI/Hebrew/infochannels/librarians/cataloging_committee/Documents/catalogcom/Protocol-27-02-2012-rev.docx)

<sup>13</sup> [http://web.nli.org.il/sites/NLI/Hebrew/infochannels/librarians/cataloging\\_committee/Pages/RDA-course-2013-08.aspx](http://web.nli.org.il/sites/NLI/Hebrew/infochannels/librarians/cataloging_committee/Pages/RDA-course-2013-08.aspx)

<sup>14</sup> Adler, Elhanan, Aviva Shichor and Rochelle Kedar. Cataloging: a book of principles and rules. 3d ed. Jerusalem : Israel Center for Libraries, 1995. (In Hebrew)

<sup>15</sup> [http://web.nli.org.il/sites/NLI/Hebrew/infochannels/librarians/Cataloging\\_Art/Pages/default.aspx](http://web.nli.org.il/sites/NLI/Hebrew/infochannels/librarians/Cataloging_Art/Pages/default.aspx)

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[http://web.nli.org.il/sites/NLI/Hebrew/infochannels/librarians/Cataloging\\_Art/Documents/relationship-designators.pdf](http://web.nli.org.il/sites/NLI/Hebrew/infochannels/librarians/Cataloging_Art/Documents/relationship-designators.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> Inter-University Committee on Cataloging, "Protocol of the meeting of January 2, 2014" (in Hebrew),  
[http://web.nli.org.il/sites/NLI/Hebrew/infochannels/librarians/cataloging\\_committee/Documents/catalogcom/Protocol-02-01-2014.docx](http://web.nli.org.il/sites/NLI/Hebrew/infochannels/librarians/cataloging_committee/Documents/catalogcom/Protocol-02-01-2014.docx)

<sup>18</sup> Joint Steering Committee for Development of RDA, "Fast Track entries included in the April 2014 update of the RDA Toolkit, <http://www.rda-jsc.org/docs/6JSC-Sec-12.pdf>