
Book Reviews

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RDA Essentials. By Thomas Brenndorfer. Chicago: American Library Association, 2016. 376 p. \$105.00 softcover (ISBN 978-0-8389-1328-4).

With his excellent reference work, *RDA Essentials*, Thomas Brenndorfer presents a guide to the cataloging code Resource Description and Access (RDA) that is both comprehensive and comprehensible. Brenndorfer provides catalogers with a clear path through RDA, helping them to understand the cataloging code and its underlying principles in plain English. Through his thorough introduction, Brenndorfer clearly and intelligently illustrates for readers the connections between the Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records model (FRBR), FRBR user tasks, and the creation of bibliographic description. Readers of this work will thus gain not only a fairly complete bibliographic description of their chosen item, but also a greater appreciation for RDA's structure and conceptual underpinnings.

Brenndorfer launched his cataloging career in 1990 at the National Library of Canada. He has presented on FRBR and RDA at conferences for the Ontario Library Association and Canadian Library Association (verso). *RDA Essentials* stems from Brenndorfer's belief in the "importance of FRBR for the future of catalogs" (verso), a conviction clearly illustrated in his approach to elucidating RDA. The overarching organizational structure of *RDA Essentials* is, like RDA, grounded in the FRBR model. His discussion on how the Group 1 entities Work—Expression—Manifestation—Item (WEMI) relate to the distinction between content versus carrier is lucid and one of the best this reviewer has read. Librarians who have struggled to understand these concepts will find this short summary very useful.

Though Brenndorfer ably handles the theoretical side of RDA, his book is still grounded in practice. The main structure of the book follows the mental path that a cataloger would normally take when creating a bibliographic description. In the introduction, Brenndorfer sets out a "sequence of steps" (xi) that any cataloger would take when creating a simple description, such as for a book. In doing so, Brenndorfer describes how the FRBR user tasks—find, identify, select, and obtain—are truly at the heart of RDA. This user task-based workflow will help more experienced catalogers incorporate these tasks more directly into their work.

RDA Essentials is ultimately designed to serve as a "quick reference source for the RDA element set" (ix). While readers can, and probably should, follow it chapter by chapter when first creating a bibliographic description,

it will most likely serve more experienced catalogers as a tool for clarifying particular elements or rules. The book is organized into four sections. Section 1, which is the bulk of the text, is on the elements themselves. In thirteen chapters, Brenndorfer moves the reader through the WEMI model and FRBR user tasks. Each chapter begins with a short list of relevant terminology, often followed by a sidebar called "Supporting the User." This sidebar reemphasizes the FRBR user tasks as they are related to the given elements, such as how the "data recorded also supports users finding works any expressions that correspond to the user's stated search criteria" (127). Each chapter contains a chart of the elements covered in the chapter. Any related subelements are provided, as well as an indication if the element is considered core or is transcribed. "Sources of Information" for the elements are then provided. The bulk of each chapter in this section consists of each element fully described, with the related RDA rules indicated, and an example of the rule applied to a bibliographic description. Exceptions, alternatives, and related elements are also provided. Section 2 contains guidelines that are referenced in the first section and provide additional detail and support around such issues as transcription (chapter 14) and statements of responsibility (chapter 18). Section 3 guides the user on constructing access points. Section 4 provides a conclusion to the work by addressing other additional instructions, such as cases involving multiples elements (chapter 31).

Of course, as this book is about the essentials, there are some areas of cataloging with RDA that are not covered. Brenndorfer leaves the question of subjects—the creation of headings and their applications—to other resources. His work does not delve into more complex or unique issues of RDA cataloging, such as early printed resources, legal or musical works, or "instructions for changing descriptions because of the Mode of Issuance" (xv). Despite this, *RDA Essentials* will provide a solid jumping off point for most catalogers, especially for libraries dealing with more conventional collections and materials.

What is vital to note about this work is that it specifically "does not provide encoding instructions, such as those for MARC" (ix). Rather, readers should use this work to gain a better understanding of the elements themselves, and later map those to whatever relevant encoding schemes (such as MARC fields). This is an incredibly powerful and important approach to teaching RDA. RDA was designed to be encoding neutral, and sometimes a reliance on the MARC fields or thinking about cataloging through the narrow scope

of the MARC record can cause the loss of the notion and the power of relationships in RDA. The focus on records is secondary to the “important lesson is that RDA is about recording well-formed *data* and recording *relationships*” (xvi). This approach also fosters a deeper understanding of the RDA elements and will better prepare catalogers to use RDA in a variety of encoding contexts now and in the future. It also, quite rightly, refocuses the act of cataloging on users through recording “robust and reliable data in order to maximize support for users engaged in resource discovery” (xvi). Overall, this is a comprehensive work that would be brilliant as a textbook in a cataloging class. As a cataloger, this reviewer has already used this book in daily work and looks forward to keeping it close by.—Margaret E. Dull (mdull@ubalt.edu), *University of Baltimore, Baltimore, Maryland*

Exploring Discovery: The Front Door to Your Library's Licensed and Digitized Content. Edited by Kenneth J. Varnum. Chicago: ALA Editions, 2016, 292 p. \$95 softcover (ISBN: 978-0-8389-1414-4).

We are well into the twenty-first century and many libraries, large and small, are dealing with the ever-evolving subject of discovery. This book does an excellent job of covering the many discovery interfaces and platforms available and their impact at various libraries. Discovery is, to quote a statement given in chapter 10 of this book, “enabling people to pick out what they need from an otherwise unmanageable mass of information” (120). Given the changing roles of libraries, as well as the multitude of different media types with which libraries must now deal and must make accessible to patrons, discovery is more important than ever before. Thus, this growing need for discovery that is user-friendly, all encompassing (or nearly so) and fairly intuitive on the back end has given birth to a plethora of options, all of which have their benefits and drawbacks. As not every library or collection is identical, so can be said for the various discovery platforms explored in this work.

The book is divided into four sections. The first two are devoted to various systems, divided between those which are vended and those which are custom made. The third section focuses on the front-facing aspect or “interface” side of some of these systems and the fourth, on the back-end, metadata-heavy side. The majority of chapters in this book focus on discovery systems in academic libraries. Thirteen of the nineteen chapters are either case studies in academic libraries or pull their examples from academic library websites. There are also chapters devoted to discovery in archives and library combinations, including the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum. Two chapters also focus on digital and/or open access libraries where their discovery systems were of greater importance given their fully digital collections. In addition, there are a few chapters rounding out the book that do not ground themselves to a particular library type, rather

they look at discovery systems and platforms as a whole. Also worth noting is the fact that while some of the chapters in this book delve into highly niche areas such as geospatial resource discovery or use noticeably technical terminology, overall this book is quite readable.

The first section focuses on vended discovery systems, with the first two chapters concentrating on Ex Libris's offering Primo and its integrated library system Alma, and the second two chapters hone in on OCLC's WorldShare Management System and SirsiDynix's Enterprise OPAC, respectively. While three of the four were academic libraries, those three serve campus communities of varying sizes. It is elements such as these that lend themselves to how the different systems were selected and then used by the libraries in focus. The only nonacademic library focused on in this section was a combination library, museum, and archive, which also gives a unique look at what options and flexibility vended discovery systems are capable of offering.

The second section directs its attention to custom discovery systems with an emphasis on Blacklight. Blacklight is used to varying degrees by each of the five libraries discussed. Given the system's flexible nature, this does not come as a surprise. While other systems are mentioned, these chapters dive deeply into the various parts of discovery for which Blacklight is used. As such, this section is extremely useful for any library or librarian interested in using the web application. Once again, the libraries spotlighted in these five chapters are a diverse group. While three of the five chapters focus on academic libraries in the United States, chapters 7 and 8 focus on the discovery systems (and implementation of Blacklight) at a Canadian university and a museum archives, respectively.

The third section focuses on interfaces and user experiences. This section begins with dabbling in how library discovery has had to change and adapt since the advent of popular search engines such as Google. Various aspects of interfaces ranging from bento box design and single search interface to integrating online services and facets are explored in this chapter. Four of the five chapters focus on academic libraries, however much of the information in this section centers around aspects of discovery that are not only used and useful in the broad library world, but also by companies and institutions outside of the library world.

The fourth section focuses on the content and metadata aspect of discovery systems. In general, these last five chapters of the book tend to focus on the nitty-gritty technical aspects, metadata integration, and backend side of discovery platforms. To this end, the first three chapters of this section concentrate on discovery and metadata of a few digital and open access collections. This section also has two chapters dedicated to the impact of discovery platforms on libraries overall. Specifically, chapter 18 focuses on the impact in regards to the library world in general, and chapter 19