

# RDA in the Ghanaian Academic Library Cataloging Community

## Awareness, Competencies, and Implications

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*This study investigated the awareness and competencies of Ghanaian cataloging practitioners and stakeholders regarding Resource Description and Access (RDA), a little over a decade after the standard was rolled out. Survey and interviews were combined to examine the entrenchment of the RDA standard in Ghana from the viewpoint of sixty-two cataloging managers and staff in selected academic libraries. The data analyzed through descriptive statistics and thematic content analysis revealed that while 82 percent of cataloging practitioners were aware of the RDA standard, knowledge and mastery of the RDA guidelines and application of the standard was established to be low and quite basic. Fellow catalogers within libraries, attendance at local conferences, and personal research emerged as major sources of RDA awareness. It was concluded that awareness of the RDA standard will not lead to widespread adoption and implementation of the standard.*

We are experiencing an explosion of information and increased competition in the information space, with libraries particularly striving towards effectively and satisfactorily serving users. In this current digital age, the essence and contribution of information resource organization is more pronounced to attaining this mandate. Atilgan, Özel, and Çakmak submit that the prevailing information environment, influenced significantly by developments in technology, has contributed to the changes witnessed in the principles, instructions, and standards governing information organization, particularly cataloging and the creation of catalogs.<sup>1</sup> There is a shift from the mere description of information resources to the description of information resources in a manner that shows a relationship with other resources, as well as the integration of these descriptions to various information systems in the linked-data environment.

To successfully achieve this mandate, standardization is crucial.<sup>2</sup> Krasteva maintains that evidence across the globe points to the contribution of standardization in facilitating exchange and trade, managing economies, protecting healthy livelihoods of the masses, achieving community goals, and safeguarding the environment.<sup>3</sup> In the library space specifically, standardization is especially relevant in its application in areas such as international standard numbers, compilation of bibliographic descriptions, preservation of electronic documents and resources, and the assurance of service quality in libraries often expressed through service quality (SERVQUAL) and library quality (LIBQUAL).

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Although standardization of bibliographic frameworks is crucial for bibliographic description for varied reasons, equally or, perhaps, more significant is the need to standardize the set of rules guiding the entire activity of bibliographic description. The effort towards codifying and standardizing the rules for cataloging information resources commenced in the nineteenth century. Denton observes that although there are very few similarities between the cataloging practices of the early nineteenth century and these contemporary times, there is ample evidence to suggest that the practitioners of the former era were executing a system.<sup>4</sup>

The change from the Anglo American Cataloging Rules second edition (AACR2) standard to the current Resource Description and Access (RDA) standard was occasioned by the inability of the former to effectively provide guidance in as far as the bibliographic description of contemporary information resources is concerned.<sup>5</sup> As Ahonsi contends, the difficulties faced by the AACR2 standard began around the mid-1990s and coincided with the emergence of information resources in various technology enabled formats.<sup>6</sup> Also contributing to the inadequacies of the AACR2 were the emergence of contemporary principles in bibliographic description such as the Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records (FRBR) in 1998 and the International Cataloging Principles in 2009.

Ghana's library space is made up of the national library as well as academic, special, public, and school libraries. Public academic libraries found in higher educational institutions, however, represent the most resourced of all libraries in Ghana with extensive services and operations thereby making them a prime candidate for a study of this nature. The Ghana Library Association is the professional body for librarians in Ghana, irrespective of the type of library they work in. There are other networks, consortia, and committees in the Ghanaian library space with different mandates and focus. The current cataloging standard of RDA, though approaching the first decade since its inception, has yet to witness widespread adoption and implementation in Ghanaian academic libraries owing to varied reasons. These reasons, be they financial, logistical, or human related, are driving an unfortunate trend, where libraries in Ghana, irrespective of their type and form, are relying on the provisions of AACR2 instead of RDA.

## Statement of the Problem

The provisions of AACR2 have formed the basis for the cataloging practice in Ghana since its introduction in the operations of libraries. The leverage afforded by this cataloging standard, in terms of uniformity of practice and resource sharing, is not lost to academic libraries in Ghana, as they have considered and accommodated the various revisions that AACR2 underwent in their operations. As such, one expects that academic libraries in Ghana knowing fully the significance of current cataloging standards, would have taken steps to adopt and implement the provisions of RDA immediately. A decade after the rolling out of RDA as the new cataloging standard, however, this is yet to happen, owing to varied reasons such as the perceived similarity in the fundamentals of the two standards, the expensive nature of the RDA Toolkit, lack of RDA expertise, and the perception that AACR2 still meets libraries' cataloging needs. A deliberate systematic review of MARC records in the Online Public Access

Catalogs (OPACs) of most Ghanaian academic libraries by the researchers has revealed the reliance on the provisions of the AACR2 standard.<sup>7</sup>

Since the completion of the US RDA Test and the subsequent full roll out of the standard a decade ago,<sup>8</sup> the conversation surrounding the adoption and implementation of RDA in Ghana has been a rather muted one. An apparent gap exists in terms of literature of Ghanaian origin on the RDA standard, as presently, only a couple of scientific research studies on RDA of Ghanaian origin exist. This present state of affairs has contributed to the relatively limited uptake of the RDA standard in Ghana, as the required scholarly communication and scientific outputs needed to engender conversations and initiatives among key stakeholders and constituencies are clearly non-existent. To stimulate the success of the RDA standard in Ghana, this trend ought to be challenged as evidenced in countries such as South Africa and Nigeria, where the availability of RDA literature has contributed to the relative success of the standard.<sup>9</sup>

This paper investigates the extent of awareness and knowledge of the RDA standard among cataloging professionals and librarians in Ghanaian academic libraries and the concomitant implications for the country's bibliographic description and control.

## Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To determine the level of awareness of the RDA standard among cataloging librarians in Ghanaian academic libraries.
2. To ascertain the most influential sources of RDA awareness among cataloging librarians in academic libraries in Ghana.
3. To determine the level of knowledge of the RDA standard among cataloging librarians in Ghanaian academic libraries.
4. To determine the possible implications of the awareness and knowledge of RDA.

## Literature Review

In her 2014 handbook that sought to facilitate the appreciation of RDA provisions by cataloging librarians in English speaking nations in Africa south of the Sahara, Ahonsi found that awareness of the existence of the RDA standard—rather than the understanding of the standard—was pervasive among catalogers and librarians across the African continent.

In a study that sought to survey the perspectives of librarians in university libraries located within the northwestern enclave of Nigeria, Haliru, Sokari, and Bello found a relatively low (40 percent) awareness of the RDA standard among all librarians.<sup>10</sup> In a similar study assessing the extent of RDA implementation in Nigeria, Aboyade and Eluwole and Saliu, found that about 94 percent and 70 percent of all librarians respectively, were either very much aware or partially aware of the existence of RDA, with only 6 percent affirming their ignorance of the new standard.<sup>11</sup> Aboyade and Eluwole revealed

professional journals, colleague catalogers from work and other libraries, library association websites, local and international conferences, and web presentations, as some of the sources from whence the catalogers were informed about RDA.<sup>12</sup>

The adoption and implementation of RDA across the globe is facilitated differently by individual libraries and other institutional stakeholders in the library space. Acedera earmarks the Philippine Professional Regulatory Board for Librarians (PRBFL) as the body responsible for facilitating the standard's implementation in the Philippines.<sup>13</sup> The author avers that 78 percent of the respondents were aware of the resolution of the PRBFL to adopt RDA as the cataloging standard for the country, but were not aware of when their libraries intended implementing the standard. In a similar vein, Oliver identifies the contribution of the Canadian Committee of Cataloging (CCC) in raising awareness of the standard and playing an active role in educating and informing the Canadian cataloging community of the developments, changes, and presentations of the RDA standard.<sup>14</sup>

On an individual level, several studies detail the various initiatives that brought the standard to the notice of individual librarians. In a study of the RDA standard at the University of Kansas library, Kottman found that cataloging staff were largely aware of RDA and kept themselves apprised of developments in the standard, as well as its implementation through participation in webinars, studies of past presentations, and e-mail listservs from the Online Computer Library Center (OCLC).<sup>15</sup> In a study in Malaysia on the perception of cataloging librarians about the RDA standard, Mansor and Ramdzan found that an overwhelming 95 percent of the respondents were aware of the RDA standard and identified the web, in general, as well as training workshops, conference presentations, journal articles, and formal education at library schools as some of the sources from whence they learned about RDA.<sup>16</sup> In a study undertaken to ascertain the conception, outlook and potential of the implementation of the RDA standard in Turkey, Atilgan, Özel, and Çakmak found that catalogers in the country were generally in the know about the terminologies, guidelines and structure of the standard.<sup>17</sup> In a separate study, Atilgan, Özel, and Çakmak again found that awareness and appreciation of the RDA standard in Turkey was created among librarians and catalogers through workshops and working groups, while understanding of the standard was undertaken on a library-by-library basis.<sup>18</sup> Haliru, Sokari, and Bello highlighted the significance of creating awareness of the standard but cautioned that awareness is not an end in itself and should be regarded as the first step in the process of adopting RDA.<sup>19</sup>

There are a plethora of sources from which RDA awareness originates. Ascertaining which sources have had a significant impact on RDA awareness and knowledge propagation, however, is not addressed extensively in literature on this topic globally. Where literature that originates from high-income countries would show the relative popularity and impact of institution-backed sources such as workshops, working groups, webinars, email listservs, and conferences,<sup>20</sup> individualistic sources such as personal research, colleague catalogers from both within and outside their libraries, and professional journals have been identified to be more popular and impactful sources of RDA awareness and knowledge propagation in low-income countries.<sup>21</sup>

Being aware of the RDA standard, however, is distinct from being knowledgeable in its usage. For the RDA standard to witness widespread adoption and usage in academic libraries, both awareness of the standard—by management and all librarians—as well as knowledge of the standard—by cataloging librarians—are imperative. Oguntayo and Adeleke similarly surmise that knowledge of the RDA standard must transcend the mere awareness of the standard and they assert that slow implementation of the standard in Nigerian libraries was a consequence of the absence of the requisite knowledge of the standard by catalogers and librarians.<sup>22</sup> The authors also place the blame for the inadequate knowledge of the current standard partly on the reluctance of library schools to teach the RDA standard in their cataloging curricula.

Ifijeh, Segun-Adeniran, and Igbisola have observed that, although libraries in Nigeria and most developing countries across the African continent have been aware of the RDA standard since its implementation in 2013, the inadequate knowledge of the standard has contributed significantly to the slow progress in implementing RDA in libraries. They therefore recommend a holistic approach towards raising awareness of RDA and suggest that this should be concurrent with fostering an understanding of the RDA standard.<sup>23</sup>

Similarly, Oguntayo and Adeleke assert that awareness of the existence of the new standard is significant; however, knowledge of the workings of the standard was basic and appears to concentrate on subject matters revolving around a general introduction and the development process of the RDA standard.<sup>24</sup>

## Research Methodology

The study's research objectives required both quantitative and qualitative data from cataloging staff at the operational level and library management at the policy level. The need to bring together both quantitative and qualitative data in this research study was to foster a better understanding of the underlying issues; thus, the mixed methods research approach was deemed appropriate. A survey was used for the quantitative phase of the study, while an interview was engaged for the qualitative phase.

The population of this study included all academic library staff engaged in the practice of cataloging and classification at the policy and decision-making level. These respondents have the authority to make decisions pertaining to their resource description and organization practices. The category included university librarians, head catalogers, and deputy head catalogers of the nine academic libraries in Ghana selected for this study. Completing the population for the study were the catalogers (staff of the cataloging units) of the nine entities involved in the practice at the operational level, as well as library staff who carry out cataloging activities in departmental and college libraries under the auspices of these academic library systems. The nine public academic libraries domiciled in nine public universities—University of Ghana (UG); Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST); University of Cape Coast (UCC); University of Professional Studies, Accra (UPSA); University of Education, Winneba (UEW); University of Development Studies (UDS); University of Mines and Technology (UMaT); University of Health and Allied Sciences (UHAS) and University of Energy &

Natural Resources (UENR)—were sampled on the basis of having an established cataloging department or unit undertaking the activity in house for at least five years. This benchmark eliminated technical university libraries and relatively new public academic libraries from the study. The population of the study is presented in the table below.

As shown in table 1, the population of the study encompassed nine university librarians, nine head catalogers, and six deputy head catalogers from the nine academic libraries. This brought the participants at the policy level to twenty-four. Equally important to the study were the staff in the cataloging departments of these academic libraries, who practice the activity on a daily basis. Table

**Table 1.** Population of respondents at policy and operational levels for the study

Study Sites	Respondents at the Policy Level			Total Staff at Policy level	Total Staff at Operational level	TOTAL
	University Librarians	Head Catalogers	Deputy Head Catalogers			
UG	1	1	1	3	10	13
KNUST	1	1	1	3	9	12
UCC	1	1	1	3	15	18
UPSA	1	1	-	2	2	4
UEW	1	1	1	3	7	10
UDS	1	1	1	3	5	8
UMaT	1	1	-	2	2	4
UHAS	1	1	1	3	5	8
UENR	1	1	-	2	1	3
TOTAL	9	9	6	24	56	80

Source: Authors' construct (2024)

1 column six shows the number of staff members that UG, KNUST, UCC, UPSA, UEW, UDS, UMaT, UHAS and UENR academic libraries engage in their cataloging practice, respectively. This brings the number of respondents at the operational level to fifty-six. In all, the population of the study (eighty) equals the number of respondents, at both the policy and decision-making level (twenty-four), and the operational level (fifty-six).

The manageable population size of eighty and the need for the views and perspectives of both categories of subjects towards the achievement of the research objectives suggested the census technique, in which all subjects were eligible for the study.

In the quantitative phase of the study, questionnaires were used to elicit data from the cataloging staff at the operational level, who were recruited through the assistance of the respective head catalogers and university librarians. Interviews were used in the qualitative phase of the study to elicit data from staff at the policy-making level. Out of the fifty-six questionnaires distributed, forty-five of them were returned and deemed usable thereby providing a response rate of 80.4 percent at the quantitative

phase. At the qualitative phase, out of the twenty-four potential interviewees, seventeen availed themselves for the exercise producing a response rate of 70.8 percent at the qualitative phase.

The study as part of a broader doctoral study, followed strict ethical guidelines right from attaining an ethical clearance from the College of Human Sciences Research Ethics Review Committee of the University of South Africa and permission letters from the Institutional Review Boards of the nine aforementioned public university libraries, to the reporting of data. The ethics review undertaken by the aforementioned bodies was for low-risk research with human participants. Survey respondents were voluntarily recruited to partake in the study by answering the questionnaire that was electronic in format. Although heads of cataloging units helped identify potential respondents, there was no coercion for their participation in the study. Voluntary participation promoted the anonymity of respondents throughout the study. The introductory part of the survey tool and interview guide afforded respondents and interview participants the opportunity to provide their informed consent before proceeding to take the survey. Respondents were also apprised on how their demographic data and responses would be used in the study.

## Results

This section presents the findings according to the objectives of the study under headings such as respondents' and interviewees' demographics, level of awareness of RDA, popular and influential sources of RDA, level of knowledge of RDA, and implications.

### Respondent and Interviewee Demographics

With respect to the education of respondents, twenty-two (49 percent) had a master's degree. Those with a bachelors' degree accounted for nineteen (42.2 percent) of the respondents and a minority of the respondents, two (4.4 percent) had doctorate degrees and two (4.4 percent) held Higher National Diploma/Diplomas as their highest academic qualification.

Table 2 shows that the majority of the respondents (sixteen, 35.6 percent) are in their first two years of service in the cataloging department, fifteen (33.3 percent) have three to five years of experience in cataloging, nine (20 percent) have six to ten years of cataloging experience, three (6.7 percent) have eleven to fifteen years of cataloging experience, while two (4.4 percent) staff members have sixteen or more years of service in the cataloging department. The data shows a fair amount of cataloging experience in the cataloging units of Ghanaian academic libraries with as much as 64.4 percent of the cataloging staff having more than three years' experience in cataloging.

Seventeen interviewees, designated from CAT 1 to CAT 17, in varied capacities such as university librarians, head catalogers and deputy head catalogers, participated in the interview session.

## Level of Awareness of RDA among Cataloging Staff in Ghanaian Academic Libraries

As the first objective of the study shows, questions were posed to the respondents on the level of awareness of the RDA standard among cataloging staff. The study found that the majority of the respondents, thirty-seven (82 percent), were aware of the standard, while the remaining eight (18 percent) of survey respondents across the nine study sites indicated that they were not aware of RDA. These eight respondents were scattered across five study sites and were found to have less than two years of experience in cataloging.

Interviewees were all very much aware of the standard though their engagement with it varied.

*I am aware of RDA as the successor to AACR2, although I cannot remember exactly when I first became aware of it.*  
(CAT 2)

*I have been aware of RDA for quite some time now, although I hardly use the standard.* (CAT 3)

*My awareness of the RDA standard is quite low to be honest, though I occasionally hear of it.*  
(CAT 12)

**Table 2.** Cataloging staff at operational level (N = 45)

<b>Gender</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
Male	19	42
Female	26	58
<b>Age</b>		
21–40	6	13
31–40	26	58
41–50	12	27
51–60	1	2
<b>Level of Education</b>		
Doctorate degree	2	4
Master's degree	22	49
Bachelor's degree	19	43
HND/Diploma	2	4
<b>Years Working in the Cataloging Unit, Section, or Department</b>		
0–2 years	16	36
3–5 years	15	33
6–10 years	9	20
11–15 years	3	7
16 years and above	2	4

Source: Authors' construct (2024)

## Popular Sources of Awareness of RDA for Respondents and Interviewees

Having established that a significant percentage of the survey respondents (82 percent) and interviewees (100 percent) were aware of the RDA standard, it was deemed imperative to unearth the sources from where they first encountered RDA as a cataloging standard. Fellow catalogers within respondents' libraries emerged as the foremost source of RDA awareness according to the majority of the respondents, twenty-five (56 percent). This means that catalogers, who might have heard or learned about cataloging from various institutions, seminars or training, had an influence on other catalogers and librarians as far as RDA as a cataloging standard is concerned. In addition, attendance at local conferences, workshops, or seminars and personal research each emerged as notable sources of RDA awareness among eighteen (40 percent) of the survey respondents respectively. The least frequently



cited source of awareness of RDA was through webinars, with only two (4.5 percent) respondents indicating this as a source. The data on the source of awareness of RDA among cataloging staff is illustrated in figure 1.

From the perspective of interviewees, the sources of their RDA awareness were established to be personal and, in some instances, institutional. Some of these interviewees alluded to the involvement of stakeholders in Ghana's library and information space in the creation of awareness of the standard, while others indicated the contribution and initiatives of their library management towards RDA awareness creation.

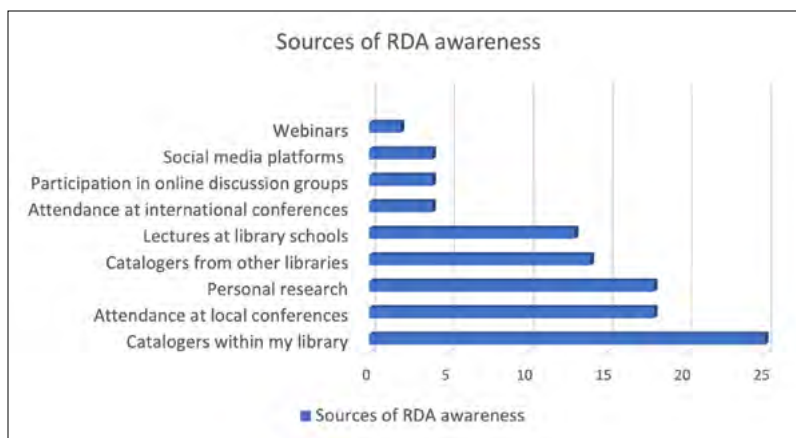


Figure 1. Sources of RDA awareness

Some of these interviewees alluded to the involvement of stakeholders in Ghana's library and information space in the creation of awareness of the standard, while others indicated the contribution and initiatives of their library management towards RDA awareness creation.

*I cannot recall exactly the moment I first heard or read about RDA, but I do recall clearly a workshop I attended in 2012, under the auspices of CARLIGH, where RDA was first introduced to Ghanaian catalogers. The training was quite helpful unfortunately, since then, I have not heard about any such program in Ghana's information space. (CAT 1)*

*I am quite aware of the RDA standard. I have heard about it in passing in some training programs and also through my own personal studies and research. (CAT 5)*

*My first encounter with RDA was during its early years, when I was nominated to represent my library in an RDA cataloging workshop organized at the University of Ghana between 11th to 13th April, 2012. The workshop was organized by CARLIGH and funded by the International Network for Advancing Science and Policy (INASP). (CAT 9)*

*I got to know about RDA quite recently through a colleague in a different library in passing. (CAT 13)*

These participants, as policy and decision makers in the university library systems under consideration in this study, averred that little effort is being made by their library management teams to create awareness for the RDA standard.

*The subject of RDA has been raised at our management meeting before, but we are yet to roll out any program to create awareness about the standard among our catalogers. (CAT 5)*

*Within the confinement of our library, I can say no official effort has been made or currently underway to create awareness about RDA. On an unofficial note, the quite experienced catalogers around do educate other cataloging staff about RDA records when they come across it in their daily copy cataloging routines. (CAT 7)*

*My management team has not organized any program to create awareness about RDA, because of the small size of our cataloging activity, the low understanding of the RDA standard and our difficulty of understanding the need for changing from AACR2 to RDA in the first place. (CAT 13)*

### Influence of the Sources of RDA Awareness on Current Knowledge on RDA

Having identified the various sources of respondents' RDA awareness, the researcher sought to ascertain the influence such sources of awareness had on respondents' current knowledge of the use of RDA as a cataloging standard in libraries. This was aimed at expanding the conversation from merely revealing the most popular sources of awareness to the most influential sources of awareness. Respondents were asked to rate the influence of each source to their level of RDA knowledge on a five-point Likert scale with 1 being the least influential and 4 being the most influential while N/A awarded null or zero points. The data is presented in table 3, using frequencies, percentages, and weighted means.

Table 3 depicts the influence of the sources of awareness of RDA on respondents' current knowledge of RDA.

### Level of Knowledge of RDA

**Table 3.** Influence of the sources of RDA awareness on current RDA knowledge ( $n = 45$ )

Source of Awareness	Influence on Knowledge/Competency					Weighted Mean
	4	3	2	1	NA	
Attendance at local conferences / workshops / seminars	7 (16%)	9 (20%)	2 (4%)	1 (2%)	26 (58%)	3.16
Attendance at international conferences / workshops / seminars	2 (4%)	2 (4%)	1 (2%)	1 (2%)	39 (87%)	2.83
Through fellow catalogers within libraries	12 (27%)	9 (20%)	2 (4%)	-	22 (49%)	3.44
Through fellow catalogers from other libraries	7 (16%)	9 (20%)	1 (2%)	1 (2%)	27 (60%)	3.22
Through personal research	7 (16%)	6 (13%)	1 (2%)	-	31 (69%)	3.42
Through participation in online discussion groups	-	1 (2%)	1 (2%)	-	42 (96%)	2.50
Through Webinars	-	-	1 (2%)	1 (2%)	43 (96%)	1.50
Through social media platforms such as Facebook, Telegram, WhatsApp, X, etc.	1 (2%)	3 (8%)	1 (2%)	1 (2%)	39 (86%)	3.00
Through lectures at library schools	4 (9%)	8 (18%)	4 (9%)	-	29 (64%)	3.00

Source: Authors' construct (2024)

Having established the awareness of the RDA standard among survey respondents, the researchers sought to further ascertain the level of knowledge of RDA among these same respondents. This was to

find out whether the level of knowledge of respondents regarding the RDA standard was at the basic, intermediate, or advanced level.

To this end, respondents were invited to grade their knowledge using fifteen RDA statements made of five basic, five intermediate, and five advanced statements on a five-point Likert scale. This was to ascertain whether respondents were extremely knowledgeable, moderately knowledgeable, somewhat knowledgeable, slightly knowledgeable, or not at all knowledgeable. The findings are presented in table 4 below using frequencies, percentages, weighted means, and average weighted means.

Table 4 demonstrates that a majority of the respondents were extremely knowledgeable about the first five RDA statements (“RDA is a cataloging standard”; “RDA replaced AACR2”; “RDA went into testing for two years”; “RDA was implemented in 2013”; “RDA was built on the foundation of AACR”), which are basic in nature. A relatively lesser portion were found to be moderately knowledgeable about these basic RDA statements. This implies that the majority of respondents were very knowledgeable about the basic RDA statements rather than being limited.

As shown in table 4, a majority of respondents were moderately knowledgeable about the second set of five RDA statements (“RDA requires catalogers to learn new cataloging instructions”; “RDA has affected current cataloging practice”; “RDA requires new MARC fields to accommodate new RDA elements”; “RDA has changed catalog display”; “Change to RDA has led to an increase in the cost of training”), which were intermediate in form. A slightly higher percentage of respondents were found to be somewhat knowledgeable about the intermediate RDA statements. This demonstrates that the majority of the respondents are not extremely knowledgeable regarding these intermediate RDA statements while a lesser percentage were found not to have any knowledge of these statement at all.

Table 4 also shows that the majority of the respondents indicated that they were not at all knowledgeable of the last five RDA statements (“RDA has occasioned some adjustments in integrated library systems”; “RDA is a set of instructions or guidelines to describe all types of resources in all formats”; “Functional requirements for bibliographic records (FRBR) provides the conceptual foundation for RDA”; “RDA data can be encoded using MARC 21 and Dublin Core”; “RDA is a standalone standard that requires libraries who want to adopt to subscribe to the RDA toolkit”), which are advanced in nature. A slightly higher number of respondents indicated that they were only slightly knowledgeable of these advanced statements. This implies that very few of the respondents indicated that they had extreme, moderate, or some knowledge of the advanced RDA statements.

Table 4 again presents the weighted mean of the fifteen RDA statements, as well as the average weighted mean of the three categories of knowledge statements, that is, basic, intermediate, and advanced. Table 5.4 shows the weighted mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) of the basic knowledge statements to be higher than those of the intermediate and advanced knowledge statements thereby leading to the highest average weighted mean for the three categories of knowledge statements, at 3.42.

Based on the average weighted mean of the three categories of RDA statements—basic ( $\bar{x} = 3.42$ ), intermediate ( $\bar{x} = 2.89$ ), and advanced ( $\bar{x} = 2.54$ )—the researcher concludes that the level of knowledge

**Table 4.** Respondents' level of knowledge of RDA (N = 45)

RDA Statements	Level of Knowledge/Competency					Weighted Mean	Average Weighted Mean
	5	4	3	2	1		
Basic Knowledge/Competency							
RDA is a cataloging standard	18 (40%)	15 (33%)	3 (7%)	3 (7%)	6 (13%)	3.80	
RDA replaced AACR2	16 (35%)	12 (27%)	5 (11%)	4 (9%)	8 (18%)	3.53	
RDA was built on the foundation of AACR	14 (31%)	9 (21%)	8 (17%)	6 (14%)	8 (17%)	3.33	3.42
RDA was implemented in 2013	10 (22%)	7 (16%)	15 (33%)	4 (9%)	9 (20%)	3.11	
RDA went into testing for 2 years	13 (29%)	7 (16%)	13 (29%)	6 (13%)	6 (13%)	3.33	
Intermediate Knowledge/Competency							
RDA requires catalogers to learn new cataloging guidelines	13 (29%)	9 (20%)	10 (22%)	4 (9%)	9 (20%)	3.29	
RDA requires new MARC fields to accommodate new RDA elements	10 (22%)	10 (22%)	7 (16%)	7 (16%)	11 (24%)	2.62	
RDA has changed catalog display	2 (6%)	11 (24%)	11 (24%)	10 (22%)	11 (24%)	2.73	2.89
RDA has affected current cataloging practice	5 (11%)	8 (18%)	13 (29%)	8 (18%)	11 (24%)	3.02	
The change to RDA has led to an increase in the cost of training	3 (7%)	13 (29%)	11 (24%)	8 (18%)	10 (22%)	2.80	
Advanced Knowledge/Competency							
Functional requirements for bibliographic records (FRBR) provides the conceptual foundation for RDA	7 (16%)	4 (9%)	6 (13%)	10 (22%)	18 (40%)	2.18	
RDA data can be encoded using MARC 21 and Dublin core	4 (8%)	7 (16%)	7 (16%)	13 (29%)	14 (31%)	2.87	
RDA is a standalone standard that requires libraries who want to adopt to subscribe to the RDA toolkit	2 (5%)	6 (13%)	9 (20%)	9 (20%)	19 (42%)	2.84	2.54
RDA has occasioned some adjustments in integrated library systems	7 (16%)	9 (20%)	10 (22%)	9 (20%)	10 (22%)	2.38	
RDA is a set of instructions or guidelines to describe all types of resources in all formats	7 (16%)	8 (18%)	11 (24%)	9 (20%)	10 (22%)	2.42	

Source: Authors' construct

of RDA among respondents, and for that matter, catalogers in public university libraries in Ghana, is predominantly basic.

When interviewees were probed as to the estimation of their knowledge in RDA, the majority stated that their knowledge, as well as that of their cataloging staff, was at the basic level.

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*My knowledge of the RDA standard is quite basic and does not extend beyond the fundamentals of the standard. Same can be said for our cataloging staff. (CAT 12)*

CAT 16 observed that:

*For me, whose knowledge of RDA is predominantly self-taught, I can say my knowledge of the standard is at the basic level. (CAT 16)*

However, a participant from an RDA implementing library observed that:

*I believe, in all fairness, that myself and the cataloging staff here can be placed at the intermediate level in terms of knowledge of the standard. These are people working with the standard on a daily basis after all, and having their capacities built on a regular basis. (CAT 10)*

## Discussion of Findings

### Level of Awareness of RDA in Ghanaian Academic Libraries

The level of awareness of the RDA standard is crucial to its widespread adoption and implementation. The awareness of the standard among its key stakeholders and their constituencies engenders positive and impactful conversation in lieu of the adoption and implementation of the standard.

The study found an overwhelming awareness of the RDA standard in Ghanaian academic libraries, as eighty-two percent of survey respondents and 100 percent of interviewees indicated their awareness of the RDA standard. What was found lacking, according to a majority of interviewees, was a conscious and deliberate effort to continually create awareness of the standard and propagate its knowledge among key stakeholders. The inadequacy of institutional involvement in the RDA initiative was also earmarked by interviewees as a worrying trend.

Regardless of the high level of awareness of the standard, the in-house creation of awareness for the RDA standard in the Ghanaian academic library environment has been quite low and this is a theme that readily emerges from the findings of the study. This can only mean that participants of the study became aware of the standard from sources outside of programs initiated by their respective libraries. In all but one of the nine academic libraries studied, the awareness creation of RDA at both the cataloging unit and library management levels, were found to be totally non-existent. This mirrors the finding of Ahonsi, who found the awareness creation of RDA to be very low in sub-Saharan countries.<sup>25</sup> A majority of the academic libraries studied indicate, through their interviewees, that no RDA awareness creation has been initiated at the library management level to promote the standard among catalogers, thereby corroborating a similar finding by John-Okeke of academic libraries in Nigeria.<sup>26</sup> The awareness of RDA among all librarians of different expertise and users is the ideal scenario as they all interrogate the library catalog at one time or the other, but for catalogers and management are absolutely required to be aware of the standard and its contribution.

## Sources of RDA Awareness

Knowing the sources of RDA awareness and their influence on propagating RDA knowledge is important, as it demonstrates whether the most popular sources are necessarily the most influential sources for propagating RDA knowledge. This has the capacity of highlighting the most influential sources of publicizing the RDA standard for future implementers. In table 3, the study reveals fellow catalogers within the libraries, personal research, catalogers from other libraries, attendance at local conferences, lectures at library schools, social media, and attendance at international conferences as the most popular and influential sources for creating awareness and propagating RDA knowledge. This partly confirms the findings of Saliu as well as Mansor and Ramdzan who found these sources as RDA awareness creation avenues. Where these studies fall short, is the determination of the extent of influence of these sources on the propagation of RDA knowledge.<sup>27</sup>

In the studies undertaken by Maurer and Panchyshyn, Mansor and Ramdzan, and Wacker and Han, Library and i-Schools are identified as instrumental in creating awareness of the RDA standard and entrenching RDA knowledge among catalogers.<sup>28</sup> This is contrary to the finding of this study, where the impact of library schools as an avenue for creating awareness of and disseminating RDA knowledge was found to be quite low. This is surprising, considering the fact that most of the respondents with a professional librarianship background are between the ages of thirty and fifty, and passed through the education offered in Ghana's library schools within the last decade. The fact that library schools in Ghana, still, at the time of this research do not feature RDA in their curriculum at the undergraduate, graduate, and post-graduate levels, as evidenced from their cataloging syllabus, is surprising and surely contributes to the lack of adoption and implementation of RDA in Ghana.

Awareness creation through local conferences, workshops, and seminars was lowly ranked and fell outside the top three influential sources of RDA knowledge. This revelation was substantiated by interviewees in the qualitative phase of the study, who confirmed the paucity of RDA training programs in the Ghanaian library space. The relatively more experienced participants, who have been around for a while and had institutional memory, could attest to only one such local RDA training program, a joint collaboration between the Consortium of Academic and Research Libraries in Ghana (CARLIGH) and the International Network for Advancing Science and Policy (INASP), in 2012. This shows clearly that professional librarianship bodies and organizations in Ghana have not been effective in creating awareness about the RDA standard. This is in stark contrast to what happened in South Africa, where the national library was vibrant in creating awareness, and Nigeria, where, although the implementation of the standard is not widespread, professional librarianship bodies have been active in organizing basic workshops and seminars in a bid to create awareness of the standard among their members.<sup>29</sup>

It is also instructive to observe that other catalogers from within respondents' libraries and in other libraries emerged as influential sources of RDA awareness and knowledge. This establishes the presence of a form of social nexus among Ghanaian catalogers and leads one to question the difficulty of having an organized cataloging community in Ghana as established by interview participants. The absence of a

vibrant cataloging community in Ghana, as established by the study, can be ascribed as a contributory factor to RDA's unpopularity, coupled with lack of impact of social media and webinars as sources of RDA awareness and knowledge. This is because such a constituency would ideally be instrumental in advancing the standard in such regards, as is the case in South Africa, where the activism of the Library and Information Association of South Africa (LIASA) has been vibrant. This finding is at variance to the situation in the advanced jurisdictions, as reported by El-Sherbini, Kalwara, Dale and Coleman, Park and Tosaka, and Turner, where an active cataloging community played a key role in influencing opinions about the standard.<sup>30</sup>

### Knowledge of the RDA Standard

The knowledge of the RDA standard ensures the success, entrenchment, and longevity of the standard. Thus, knowledge of the RDA standard, rather than the mere awareness of the standard, is what guarantees the success of the standard. The study finds that, although awareness of the RDA standard is quite high among respondents and interviewees, knowledge of the standard among these same people was very low. This corroborates the findings of Ahonsi, to the effect that knowledge of the standard lags behind its awareness in many countries in sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>31</sup> It again confirms the conclusion of Ifijeh, Segun-Adeniran, and Igbisola who reported that libraries across the African continent have largely been aware of the RDA standard since its implementation in 2013.<sup>32</sup> This study revealed that the level of knowledge of RDA, among respondents and interviewees alike, was predominantly basic and this supports the positions established by Oguntayo and Adeleke and John-Okeke.<sup>33</sup>

The basic level of RDA knowledge in Ghana accounts for the relatively low implementation of the standard in Ghana. The absence of Ghanaians adequately knowledgeable in the workings of RDA has denied the country the expertise needed to build the capacities of Ghanaian catalogers and change the direction of the country's bibliographic description. This has, in turn, been flagged as a prime inhibiting factor of RDA implementation in Ghana and the inability of library management of academic libraries and library organizations in Ghana to organize RDA training programs for staff and librarians alike in this study. This conclusion supports earlier findings by Oguntayo and Adeleke, in the case of Nigeria.<sup>34</sup>

### Implication of Awareness and Knowledge of RDA

The foregoing demonstrates that awareness of RDA may not lead to a successful adoption and implementation of the standard in Ghana. The relatively high levels of awareness of the standard, as established in this study, have not translated into widespread adoption and implementation of the standard. On the contrary, the standard is more likely to be implemented successfully in Ghana, if the knowledge of RDA among catalogers in Ghanaian university libraries surpasses the basic level. This implies that Ghanaian university libraries are likely to face difficulties in their quest to implement RDA in their libraries, unless knowledge of the standard in the country transcends its current basic level to intermediate and, preferably, advanced levels. Achieving such an objective will require a concerted effort on the part of the national library, academic library management, professional library organizations, and the library schools in Ghana. Knowledge of the standard is likely to be advanced with

widespread implementation in the country but, with the current state of non-implementation in all but one public academic library, the predominant basic level of RDA knowledge is not only surprising but worrying.

## Conclusion

This study demonstrates that RDA awareness among cataloging librarians in Ghanaian university libraries is significant. The individualized nature of both the most popular and influential sources of RDA awareness indicates the limited involvement of institutions in RDA awareness creation. Unfortunately, knowledge of RDA has not fared as well, hardly transcending the basic level, even for practitioners in the only library that has implemented RDA. To a large extent, this trend is driven by the inactiveness of institutional stakeholders in the RDA conversation, although they are ideally placed to facilitate the development of RDA knowledge among Ghanaian catalogers. The active involvement of institutional stakeholders in the RDA initiative in Ghana would advance the success of the RDA standard in the country as such organizations are likely to pursue RDA awareness creation and knowledge propagation concurrently, a strategy that has been engaged to great effect in other jurisdictions such as Europe, the Americas, and South Africa.

## Recommendations

To enhance the level of awareness and knowledge of RDA in academic libraries in Ghana, the authors suggest that:

1. Academic library management should promote awareness and knowledge of the RDA standard through in-house training programs.
2. Professional librarianship institutions and organizations such as CARLIGH, GLA, and AHELD should actively involve themselves in the RDA adoption and implementation conversation by featuring the standard in webinars, conferences, meetings, and other training programs.
3. Catalogers in academic libraries in Ghana should form a cataloging community, under the auspices of existing bodies such as GLA and CARLIGH, to influence policies and pursue issues of common interest such as creating awareness about RDA and propagating its knowledge.
4. Academic library management and professional librarianship institutions and organizations, such as CARLIGH, GLA, and AHELD, should look beyond RDA awareness to RDA knowledge propagation, as the latter contributes more to the successful implementation of the standard.
5. Library schools in Ghana should incorporate RDA in their cataloging syllabi and gradually phase out the teaching of AACR2 in an attempt to advance knowledge of and competence with the new standard.



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