

RDA
AND SERIALS
CATALOGING
SECOND EDITION

ED JONES

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INTRODUCTION

THIS MANUAL PROVIDES AN INTRODUCTION TO THE 2020 REVISION OF the *Resource Description and Access* content standard as it applies to the cataloging of serials and ongoing integrating resources.¹ The 2020 revision is known as “Official RDA” to distinguish it from the superseded 2013 version, known as “Original RDA.” *RDA and Serials Cataloging* is designed to be used by serials catalogers who are new to RDA and by monograph catalogers who are new to serials cataloging. It assumes a basic knowledge of the Original RDA or its predecessor, the *Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules* (AACR2), or both, and of the MARC 21 Bibliographic format, but not necessarily as these apply to the cataloging of serials and ongoing integrating resources.

In terms of RDA itself, this manual assumes that you have a passing familiarity with the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) Library Reference Model (LRM), the conceptual model to which RDA now conforms, and with CONSER (Cooperative ONline SERIALs), the cooperative cataloging program that has strongly influenced serials cataloging in North America for more than fifty years. A familiarity with LRM will help your understanding of the structure of Official RDA and its elements, while a familiarity with CONSER will help your understanding of certain elaborations of practice in the manual.

PART I: AN INTRODUCTION TO SERIALS, SERIALS CATALOGING, AND RDA

In part I, we discuss the actual *work* of serials cataloging. Those new to serials cataloging will be introduced to the infinite variety of the objects of such cataloging—*serials*—and to the occasionally arcane mysteries of the craft itself.

Chapter 1 sets out the salient characteristics of serials and describes the variety of serials cataloging practices that have held sway at one time or another over the past two centuries, along with the arguments offered in support of these practices as well as those raised in opposition. These arguments tend to get replayed from time to time—occasionally when the original context has long been forgotten—and it

is useful to understand that a solution designed for one environment may not be suitable once that environment either no longer exists or has changed beyond recognition. It is also useful to understand that nearly every solution imaginable has been deemed appropriate at one time or another, but none has proved permanent, nor is any likely to.

Chapter 2 elaborates the redesigned and restructured RDA, both in terms of LRM and in terms of the changes that have occurred from Original RDA and AACR2.

Chapter 3 provides some rudimentary guidance on how to search for serial records in large bibliographic databases, how to recognize problematic situations, and how to avoid pitfalls.

PART II: CATALOGING SERIALS AND ONGOING INTEGRATING RESOURCES USING RDA

Cataloging manuals are typically organized according to either the sequence of rules presented in the cataloging code or the sequence of fields presented in the MARC 21 Bibliographic format. An example of the former is the first edition of *Maxwell's Handbook for RDA*; an example of the latter is the *CONSER Editing Guide*. The *CONSER Cataloging Manual* is in a class by itself, generally following the sequence of Original RDA but with special chapters devoted to features specific to serials and to special classes of serials.²

Given that RDA—especially as presented in the new (2020) RDA Toolkit—is designed as an online tool rather than as a publication to be read sequentially, and given that the current *structure* of catalog records is not congruent with the structure of RDA, the designer of a manual for RDA is presented with challenges in terms of organization, but also a certain freedom. The challenge is to recast this online tool in a form that can be consumed as sequential text; the freedom is that one can do so in whatever way seems most useful, as the source material is independent of any sequential context.

This manual adopts as much as possible an international approach. Because the International Standard Bibliographic Description³ (ISBD) is recognized as the standard for descriptive data in the Statement of International Cataloguing Principles (ICP) that informs RDA, it seems reasonable in the current manual to hew fairly closely to the structure of ISBD, at least in its general outline. At the same time, where the LRM provides a more useful point of departure, this structure is used.

Because of its central role and necessarily elaborate structure, part II requires a more detailed exposition. Given that RDA is initially being implemented in the environment termed implementation scenario C

(see “RDA Implementation Scenarios” later in this introduction), RDA elements relating to the four LRM “WEMI” entities (work, expression, manifestation, item) are presented here in the rough sequence in which catalogers encounter them in MARC bibliographic records rather than grouped according to the relevant LRM entity.

Bear in mind that the LRM modeling of serials entails what is called a “WEM lock,” meaning that a serial work is realized in one and only one expression, and this expression is in turn embodied in one and only one manifestation, a one-to-one-to-one cardinality. This means that translations, reproductions, etc., of serials are treated as distinct works, and all relationships between serials are consequently treated as relationships between works. To compensate somewhat for this departure from the more generous one-to-many cardinality that applies to other types of resource, RDA provides a means of gathering closely related serials—*appellation of work group* and its narrower elements—but this element has not yet been implemented in MARC other than implicitly in the ISSN-L (currently recorded in [022] \$1 but expected to migrate to its own field [023]), which serves as an *identifier for work group*. (See more on this in chapter 5.) The first five chapters of part II are devoted to the cataloging of print serials, including reproductions of print serials in other media. Exceptional practices for the cataloging of online serials and ongoing integrating resources are given in chapters 9 and 10, respectively.

Part II generally adheres to the following structure:

- Chapter 4: Introduction and general instructions relating to RDA and MARC 21
- Chapter 5: Elements relating to the bibliographic description of serials:
 - » Elements organized by ISBD area
 - » Elements identified by element name, MARC 21 tag/subfield codes, and RDA CURIEs (see “Representation of RDA Compact URIs [CURIEs] in Element Instructions” later in this introduction)
 - » Examples include ISBD-prescribed punctuation and MARC 21 coding
 - » “Note on” elements (e.g., *note on edition statement*) given with the instructions for the related element (e.g., *edition statement*), not with instructions relating to the ISBD Notes area (area 7)
 - » Where RDA provides more instructions covering a general class of element (e.g., titles), these are addressed at the point where a member of that class is first encountered (e.g., *title proper*)

- » Where PCC supplies the string encoding scheme (SES) for structuring the value for an element, this SES is described
 - » Where RDA indicates that providing access for an element may support a particular user task, this is noted
- Chapter 6: Relationships between serials
 - Chapter 7: Identifying serial works—authorized access points for works and key titles
 - Chapter 8: Identifying related entities—authorized access points for persons, corporate bodies, and other resources related to the serial described
 - Chapter 9: Special instructions relating to online serials
 - Chapter 10: Special instructions relating to ongoing integrating resources
 - The epilogue provides a short excursion into the future of RDA implementation scenario A. The account is necessarily speculative, but it provides an introduction to the world of linked data and a very different way of viewing the products of cataloging.

RDA IMPLEMENTATION SCENARIOS

RDA is designed to work competently in four environments or “implementation scenarios,” lettered A to D in order of decreasing sophistication:

Scenario A: Linked open data (metadata description sets—one for each entity described—are expressed in Resource Description Framework (RDF) using Internationalized Resource Identifiers (IRIs) taken from the RDA Registry)

Scenario B: Relational or object-oriented data (metadata description sets—one for each entity described—are expressed in a set of structured data tables and columns [e.g., in a Microsoft (MS) Access database] that correspond exactly to entities and elements taken from the RDA Registry)

Scenario C: Bibliographic/authority data (metadata description sets—an integrated one [bibliographic record] for the resource entities comprising a single information resource, and discrete ones [authority records] for other entities associated with the information resource—are expressed in an encoding schema [e.g., MARC 21] that aligns with entities and elements taken from the RDA Registry)

Scenario D: Flat file data (metadata description sets—an integrated one for the resource entities comprising a single information resource, and discrete ones for other entities associated with the information resource—are expressed in a layout that uses a string encoding scheme (SES) to specify entities and elements taken from the RDA Registry; printed products—book and card catalogs—and microform products fall under this scenario)

MARC 21 record exchange in North America currently takes place using the bibliographic/authority data structure described by scenario C, and consequently this manual is written with a focus on that implementation scenario. Although the MARC 21 formats are capable of supporting linked bibliographic and authority records as described in implementation scenario C, the mechanism for doing so—subfield \$0—is not yet in widespread use for this purpose, and MARC records do not split neatly into entity-specific metadata description sets as required by scenarios A and B.

Looking momentarily beyond North America, note that subfield \$0 is routinely employed in MARC 21 records used by the German-language cataloging community for their RDA records. In the following example, three distinct \$0 links are provided to the authority record for the Österreichische Gesellschaft für Agrarökonomie.

Example of Linked RDA Record from the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek

```
[245] 00 $a Austrian journal of agricultural economics and rural studies
$c ÖGA
[710] 2# $0 (DE-588)5060028-X $0 http://d-nb.info/gnd/5060028-X $0 (DE-
101)050600281 $a Österreichische Gesellschaft für Agrarökonomie $e
Herausgebendes Organ $4 isb
```

Scenarios A and B still lie a bit in the future. However, in anticipation of their ultimate arrival, this edition provides IRIs for RDA elements. An introduction to linked data and the Semantic Web—prerequisites of a scenario A environment—is provided as the epilogue to this manual.

CITATION NUMBERS

This manual employs citation numbers whenever it may be useful to consult a specific segment of RDA text in the Official RDA Toolkit.

Citation numbers consist of four pairs of digits, separated by points, and should be entered directly into the search box in the Official RDA Toolkit to retrieve the related segment of text (which will be highlighted in the result). Unlike instruction numbers in the Original RDA Toolkit (or rule numbers in AACR2), citation numbers in the Official RDA Toolkit were designed solely to facilitate this task: taking you from a citation in a printed product such as this manual to the related segment of text in the Official RDA Toolkit.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION (DATA PROVENANCE)

AACR2 used the phrase “sources of information,” further differentiated into a “chief source of information” (the source from which the title proper was taken) and “prescribed sources of information” (a hierarchy of sources from which to take element values for recording in a given area of the bibliographic description). If a given value was taken from a source other than a prescribed source, it was recorded within square brackets in the bibliographic description. Catalogers spoke of the “chief source” and “prescribed sources” when discussing these matters.

RDA discusses sources of information in the Guidance section labeled “Data Provenance.” It defines “source of information” as “a source of a data value of an element” and gives a general order of preference for printed resources at [09.53.46.48]. Libraries applying ISBD as an SES may want to follow the slightly more elaborate order of preference for printed continuing resources given at A.4.2.1.1 in that standard (see endnote 1).

In this manual, we will simply refer to the *source* (meaning the source from which the information is taken) unless it is necessary to differentiate one source from another.

REPRESENTATION OF MARC 21 CONTENT DESIGNATION IN EXAMPLES

Because the display conventions for MARC 21 content designation vary, depending on the system doing the displaying, this manual adopts a system-neutral approach, hewing as closely as possible to the actual structure of MARC records. Three-digit field tags are presented in square brackets, and all subfield codes (including subfield \$a) are identified by a preceding dollar sign (\$). Blank values in field indicator positions and fixed-length field positions (in fields [006]–[008]) are represented

by hash marks (#). Elements in these positions are not explicitly identified, though they are outlined in examples whenever mentioned in related text.

REPRESENTATION OF RDA COMPACT URIS (CURIES) IN ELEMENT INSTRUCTIONS

Because representing RDA elements as IRIs can be rather daunting—IRIs are typically lengthy and not very memorable—element IRIs are presented in this book using the CURIE (compact URI [uniform resource identifier]) syntax, which, if it doesn't render them any more memorable, at least makes them much less lengthy.⁴ A CURIE consists of a *prefix* and a *reference*, separated by a colon. The prefix can be mapped to a namespace that can be concatenated with the reference to generate a valid IRI for the element—for example, the prefix “rdam” maps to the namespace <http://rdaregistry.info/Elements/m/>. The RDA vocabularies encompass a large number of such namespaces, and their prefixes and full forms can be found in the RDA Registry.⁵ Each RDA element reference is structured as an uppercase “P” (for “property”) followed by a unique five-digit number—for example, *frequency* has the reference P10368. Four of the RDA CURIE prefixes will be used with RDA elements in this book: rdam (Manifestation properties), rdae (Expression properties), rdaw (Work properties), and rdaa (Agent properties).

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This manual is best seen as a work in progress. Its long-term success or failure will depend heavily on the extent and quality of reader feedback. You are encouraged to contact me with any and all questions, corrections, and suggestions for improvement.

On this point, I have already benefited greatly from the advice and suggestions of colleagues, among them Everett Allgood, Anita Coleman, Robert Maxwell, Kevin Randall, and Manon Th  roux, all of whom generously agreed to review drafts of the text at various stages in its evolution, a time-consuming process that tests one's professional mettle, and Diane Hillmann, who helped me negotiate the potential minefield (for me) of linked data. The final product has benefited greatly from their suggestions. I would also like to acknowledge those who provided answers to questions as I puzzled my way along, especially Judith Kuha-gen at the Library of Congress and Linda Barnhart, two successive secretaries of the RDA Steering Committee, who helped ensure that the text would not deviate from the intent of RDA.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge one of the greatest and most successful creations of modern librarianship: the CONSER Program. I have had the honor of being involved with CONSER on and off over the decades and have seen it evolve from an intimate and somewhat tentative group of a dozen or so institutions to full and confident maturity as the premier international cooperative cataloging program. I have made extensive use of the documentation that CONSER has produced over the years, not least the *CONSER Editing Guide* and the *CONSER Cataloging Manual* (both massive and ongoing integrating resources). There are few questions in serials cataloging that these products, or the related Serials Cataloging Cooperative Training Program (SCCTP) materials, have not addressed in much more detail than I can here (see endnote 2). I would also like to acknowledge the four successive CONSER coordinators at the Library of Congress. Since Dorothy Glasby got CONSER up and running (1977–1981), CONSER has been served by a succession of coordinators—Linda Bartley (1981–1993), Jean Hirons (1993–2003), and Les Hawkins / Hien Nguyen (2003–2023)—whose longevity testifies to the pleasure they took in the work. They have guided the program along a path of innovation that its originators could hardly have imagined. CONSER continues to serve as a model for all cooperative cataloging programs.

NOTES

1. In conformance with the policy of the Program for Cooperative Cataloging (PCC), this manual excludes from consideration multipart monographs for which the parts are issued over time. Although a strict application of RDA would treat these as diachronic works, along with serials and ongoing integrating works, PCC treats them as static works.
2. Robert L. Maxwell, *Maxwell's Handbook for RDA* (Chicago: ALA Editions, 2014); *CONSER Editing Guide*, 1994 ed. (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, Acquisitions and Bibliographic Access Directorate, 1994–); *CONSER Cataloging Manual*, 2002 ed. (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, Serial Record Division, 2002–). Training materials from the Serials Cataloging Cooperative Training Program (SCCTP) can be found on the website of the CONSER program: www.loc.gov/aba/pcc/conser/scctp/scctp-materials.html.
3. *ISBD: International Standard Bibliographic Description, Consolidated Edition* (Berlin: De Gruyter Saur, 2011), www.ifla.org/files/assets/cataloguing/isbd/isbd-cons_20110321.pdf.
4. “CURIE Syntax 1.0: A Syntax for Expressing Compact URIs,” W3C Working Group Note, December 16, 2010. <http://www.w3.org/TR/curie>.
5. “Curie prefixes.” RDA Registry. <https://www.rdaregistry.info/rgData/rdaCuries.html>.

An Introduction
to Serials, Serials
Cataloging, and RDA

FOR REVIEW ONLY

AN INTRODUCTION TO SERIALS AND SERIALS CATALOGING

WHAT IS A SERIAL?

“What is a serial?” is in fact an interesting question because serials are not born,¹ they are made. To be exact, they are the invention of serials catalogers (and who better?). The definition of a serial in the sense we will be using here—the *cataloging* sense—will be found not in the *Oxford English Dictionary* but in the *ISSN Manual*, the manual used to assign International Standard Serial Numbers (ISSNs) to *serials*:

Serial. A continuing resource issued in a succession of discrete issues or parts, usually bearing numbering, that has no predetermined conclusion. e.g.: Journals, magazines, electronic journals, ongoing directories, annual reports, newspapers, monographic series, and also those journals, magazines and newsletters of limited duration that otherwise bear all the characteristics of serials (e.g., newsletter of an event).²

Note that this definition includes several examples, suggesting that you might not get the idea from the definition by itself. In this way, a serial is like a good work of art: you may not be able to say what a serial is, but you know one when you see one.

Be that as it may, using the definition from the *ISSN Manual* as our basis, we can view serials as encompassing most of the physical universe, including all living things, and the truly committed serials cataloger may very well argue for such a broad definition, if only for reasons of professional territoriality. But in the day-to-day world of serials cataloging, the decision to treat something as a serial is made on more

pragmatic grounds (viz., to minimize the amount of time and effort expended by the library in cataloging its resources, without unnecessarily compromising the user's access to those resources).

In the end, this is the whole point of the definition in the *ISSN Manual*. It recognizes that certain objects, to which we give the label “serials,” have properties that lend themselves to one or more time-saving library practices, specifically:

- A single description that can represent all the individual parts (saving cataloging time)
- A single ongoing subscription or standing order (saving acquisitions staff time)
- A single place for recording and summarizing the individual parts held (enabling [a] the efficient claiming of any part that fails to turn up and [b] the efficient reporting of holdings to the user)

If you've ever searched an online database in which serial issues are not routinely gathered together in this way (e.g., Google Books or Internet Archive), you will instantly appreciate that this approach benefits not just the cataloger but the end user as well.

Over time, pragmatic considerations have expanded and contracted the range of materials that are subject to serials cataloging. When AACR2 was implemented in 1981, the definition of a serial was much stricter than it is today. Numbering of issues or parts was absolutely required—dates of publication were no substitute. Resources that failed this test—even those published year after year with exactly the same title—were cataloged individually as monographs. As time has gone by, however, the need to control costs has encouraged an ever more pragmatic approach. The numbering requirement has long since been abandoned. Likewise, there has been a gradual progression toward ever more generous definitions of title changes that can be considered “minor” (title changes that don't trigger the creation of a new catalog record).

From these examples we can see that serials cataloging is by its nature a pragmatic activity. But what then causes certain catalogers to be drawn to this field, first tempted in from the periphery, then finally and irrevocably captured by its alluring siren song?

SERIALS ARE ORGANIC

The main attraction of serials cataloging is that serials are “alive.” Not only are they alive, but they share our major life events, and then some.

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They are born; they marry; they divorce (sometimes messily); they remarry; they may have—how to put this?—“informal” relationships; they have offspring; and they die, sometimes quickly, sometimes in a slow, painful, lingering, degenerative fashion. Some are even reborn, with theological implications that have yet to be adequately explored. One consequence of all this liveliness is that a serials catalog record is never finished, not even when you’re absolutely sure it’s dead, not even when you’ve ritualistically driven a stake through its heart, pounding with all your might.

Many examples are available to demonstrate the organic nature of serials. One of my favorites is *Saturday Review*, in its heyday an influential journal of serious thought and opinion, and an anchor for serious people, comparable to such journals today as *The New Yorker*, *The Atlantic*, and *Vanity Fair*.

For much of its existence, *Saturday Review* was under the close and remarkable editorship of a man named Norman Cousins, and therein lies a tale.³ The magazine first emerged in 1924 as *The Saturday Review of Literature*, having technically begun life four years earlier as the Saturday book review supplement to *The New York Evening Post*. *The Saturday Review of Literature* was the brainchild of a group including the supplement’s founder and editor, Henry Seidel Canby, who also served as its first editor (1924–1936). In 1942, Norman Cousins, already involved with the *Post* and the *Review*, became editor, and the *Review* changed from a strictly literary journal to one that delivered informed commentary on all aspects of contemporary life. (The title was shortened to *Saturday Review* in 1952.) In 1958, Cousins became owner as well as editor, subsequently distributing 49 percent of the shares among the staff. Circulation had grown more than tenfold since he had taken the reins and would reach more than 260,000 in 1960.

After that, things got interesting. In 1961, the stockholders sold their share in the company to McCall’s Publishing Company, which in 1972 was itself sold to an investment group headed by the owners of *Psychology Today*. By this time, *Saturday Review* had achieved a circulation of 650,000, its all-time high. But Cousins could not abide the new owners, who had decided the weekly magazine would be better off as four monthlies, each devoted to a particular aspect of contemporary life: the arts, education, science, and society. Cousins left to form his own biweekly magazine, which he named *World*—Cousins was a long-time world federalist—and soon regathered his old stable of *Saturday Review* hands under the new roof. From his perch at *World*, which had 100,000 charter subscriptions, Cousins quietly watched as the four *Saturday Review* monthlies first floundered, then sank. The owners declared bankruptcy, and Cousins came in to pick up the pieces, purchasing rights to the now-defunct title and relaunching it as *Saturday*

Review/World, which he subsequently shortened to *Saturday Review*. But after all the turmoil, even Cousins was unable to restore *Saturday Review* to its former prestige, though it would hobble along in fits and starts for another decade or so under various ownerships. In 1977, illness forced Cousins to retire from active involvement in *Saturday Review*, though he remained as chairman of the editorial board for three more years. The last issue of the journal appeared in late 1986, by which time *Saturday Review*, once—as its name implies—published weekly, was struggling to come out every other month.

So what, you may ask, does this tale of obscure origins, a slow but steady rise to fame and influence, dastardly betrayal, improbable resurrection, and finally decrepitude and decline have to do with serials cataloging? It is this: the history just related vividly describes the organic nature of a serial. To put it in terms of the relationships that form the superstructure of serials cataloging, we have reproduced the story in figure 1.1, in the form of a somewhat simplified flow diagram of the journal's "family history."

SERIALS CHANGE TITLES

I see you've gone and changed your name again . . .

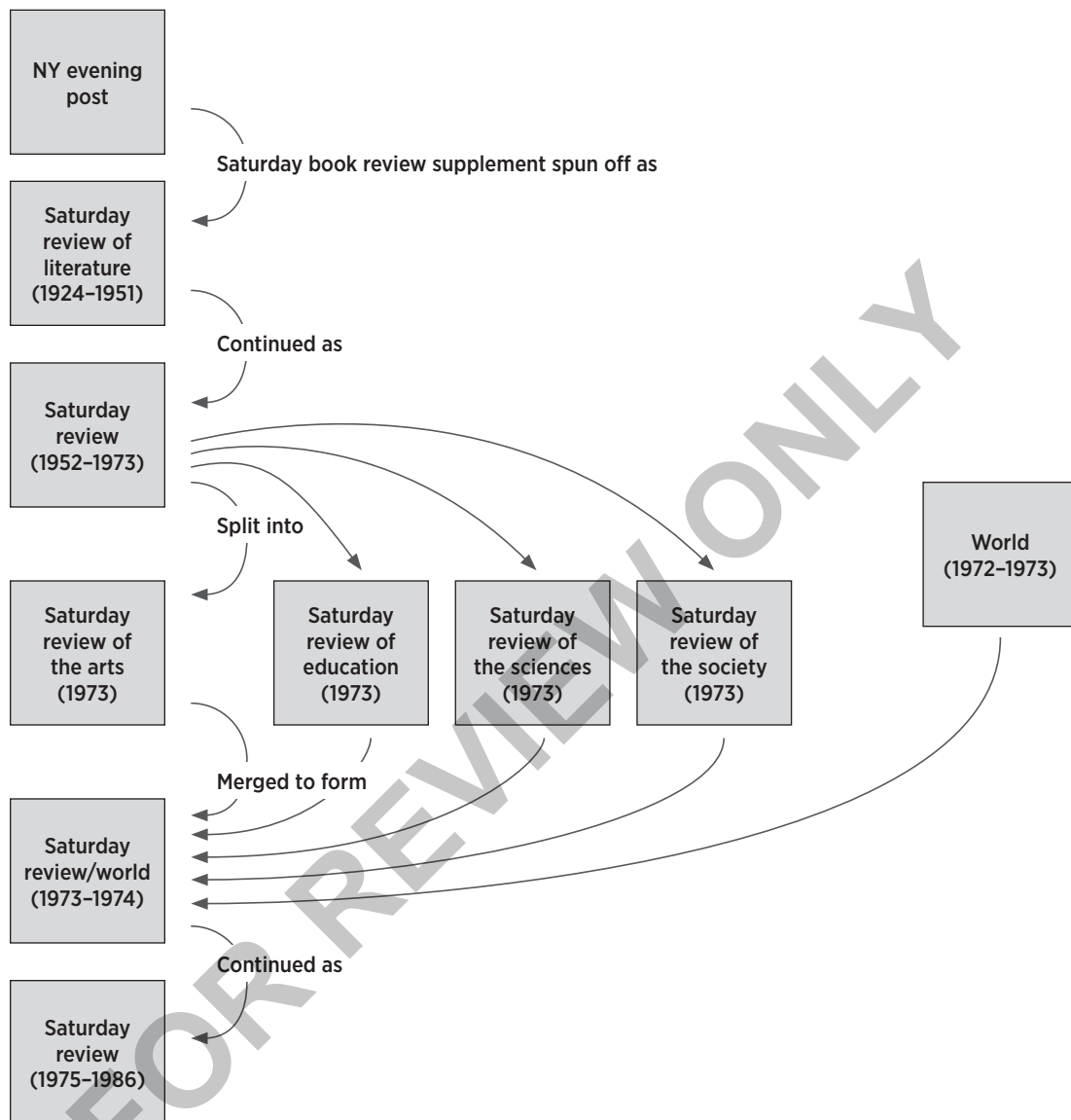
—Leonard Cohen, "So Long, Marianne"

On the outside, the most obvious thing that happened to *Saturday Review* was that its name changed. This happens to serials with alarming regularity—or, more accurately, irregularity. Publishers tend to do what they want, despite catalogers forever urging them to do what we want. This urge to be able to control our fate reached its zenith in a National Information Standards Organization (NISO) standard for the format and arrangement of periodicals (NISO/ANSI Z39.1). Quite reasonably—from our point of view—we wanted serials to appear with a predictable layout, one that would facilitate serials cataloging. Alas, publishers didn't pay attention. To put it bluntly, publishers want to sell the product. More specifically, they want to sell the current issue of the product. And they'll do whatever it takes to increase the chance of a sale. Such frenetic activity on the part of publishers seldom bodes well for serials catalogers.

Which brings us to title changes, publisher changes, etc.

The first question every cataloger must answer before cataloging a new item is this: "Is this or something like it already in our collection?" or, in our world of cooperative cataloging, "Is this or something like it already in our collective collection?"

FIGURE 1.1
Simplified flow diagram of *Saturday Review*'s "family history"



For serials catalogers, the question is also complicated by what might be called the question of the boundaries of the serial—the things that define a serial's beginning and end and that distinguish it from other serials—things which in RDA, as in AACR2 and its predecessors, are necessarily fuzzy. In such an environment, the answer to the question is often not yes or no but maybe. Serials catalogers must cultivate a tolerance for such ambiguity.

One reason for this approach is that serial titles tend to be rather common (though we're not making any judgment here). The creators

of new serials repeatedly come up with titles that have already been used many, many times before on other serials. In addition, the titles of existing serials can be subject to seemingly capricious changes, which Original RDA divided into “major” (triggering a new serial) or “minor” (merely triggering a new access point), depending on the nature of the change and the type of title words involved.

If the cataloger is lucky, the serial to be cataloged will have a unique title, such as the *Canadian Journal of Jabberwocky Studies/Revue canadienne d'études jabberwockiennes*. In such a case, the title will either be in the catalog or not, and if it is, a quick examination of its description will establish whether it's the same serial.

However, titles are often not distinctive. If the title in hand is *Journal of Science*, for example, the cataloger may be tempted to slip it into another cataloger's workflow rather than confront the arduous task of distinguishing it from its numerous namesakes. Hopefully, it carries an ISSN. Also hopefully, when the cataloger searches the ISSN in the catalog, a matching record is retrieved, and the task becomes simply to verify that no important bibliographic details need updating on that record. If no record is found, the cataloger is back to the arduous task. One can search for the serial using other characteristics, but if nothing turns up, then there is little left to do but go through the other candidates—those titled *Journal of Science* in this case—and eliminate them from consideration one by one.

Or the cataloger may encounter one of those capricious title changes, which can occur at any time without warning, and often without acknowledgment. Because serial issues typically arrive in isolation, a title change may be suspected only because the library has no record of a subscription to the title in hand, and it is not listed among the many titles tossed in the recycling bin because they arrive uninvited. Fortunately, what drives the monograph cataloger mad becomes a challenge to the serials cataloger, and there is an inexpressible satisfaction that comes from being the first to discover that *Journal Y* is actually *Journal X* in clever disguise. The more obscure the evidence that clinches this conclusion, the better.

Before we leave this section, however, it may be helpful to visit briefly with some of the more representative animals that inhabit the serials menagerie. For though the term *serial* itself is an invention of librarianship, defining publications that exhibit a certain set of useful characteristics, the concept encompasses many recognizable publication types that have an independent existence outside the world of librarianship.

THE UNIVERSE OF SERIALS

As mentioned, cataloging definitions of serials invariably include a bunch of “for examples” because the definition seems somehow incomplete without something concrete to hang it on. The definition we took from the *ISSN Manual* included several examples, and these are treated in the following subsections, along with one or two of my own choosing, because each in its way represents a unique type of publication, posing its own challenges for the unwary cataloger.

Periodicals 1: Scholarly Journals

Scholarly journals had their origins in the circular letters used by scholars to keep one another abreast of developments in the scientific world (much as preprint servers do today). The first purely scientific journals were the *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society* (or, to give its full title, *Philosophical Transactions: Giving Some Account of the Present Undertakings, Studies, and Labours of the Ingenious in Many Considerable Parts of the World*) and the French *Journal des sçavans*, both initially published in 1665.

Scholarly journals are distinguishable from magazines (see the following subsection) not just in that they target a scholarly audience but also in that, in some ways, they aspire to be books. Indeed, one of the banes of an acquisitions librarian’s existence is the discovery that the book just purchased for an astronomical sum is in fact already in the library’s collection because it was simultaneously published as volume 31, issues 1–2 of the *Journal of Devious Book Publishing*.

More generally, scholarly journals facilitate a physical transformation into books—volume by volume—by numbering the pages continuously from one issue to the next within a volume, often restricting advertising to the front and back pages of each issue, and sometimes issuing a volume title page and index once each volume is complete (though this practice has become less common in the online age). In such cases, the covers and advertising are removed prior to binding, the volume title page is slapped on the front, the index is slapped on the back, the pages are already numbered continuously from issue to issue, and voila! A book.

Removing advertising has become easier over the years as the amount of advertising in scholarly journals has diminished, even as librarians have become less interested in removing said advertising in the first place (both for cost reasons and because future historians might curse them for removing artifacts of popular culture).

Periodicals 2: Magazines

Magazines are periodicals aimed at a popular audience (as opposed to a scholarly audience), sold mainly on newsstands, in supermarkets, drugstores, bookstores, etc. Originally, magazines differed little from newspapers in appearance, but they tended to contain longer, more topical articles and were less focused on reporting current events. Early magazines included *Erbauliche Monats-Unterredungen* (Hamburg, 1663) and the *Mercure galant* (Paris, 1672). Reflecting literacy rates of the time, “popular audience” in these cases should be understood as the much more restricted “literate popular audience.” The modern magazine emerged with mass literacy in the nineteenth century, exemplified by the *Illustrated London News* and *Harper’s Weekly*.⁴

Unlike newspapers (see later in this section), magazines typically have a cover, often elaborately illustrated to attract the eye of a potential purchaser. The cover carries the title by which the magazine is known.

Electronic Periodicals and Newspapers

This category includes periodicals and newspapers that are originally published online and online versions of print periodicals and newspapers (to the extent that they are distinct from their print versions). Just as early books retained many of the features of the manuscript codices that they would soon supersede, so online periodicals and newspapers currently retain many of the features of their print analogs.

Initially, electronic periodicals and newspapers comprised simply the page images—or even more simply the text—of their print originals, in the beginning distributed on CD-ROMs and in more recent years made accessible online over the World Wide Web. As time has passed, the print and online versions have increasingly diverged. Electronic periodical and newspaper websites have taken on many of the characteristics of ongoing integrating resources (discussed in chapter 10), continuously updated with breaking news in the case of newspapers and magazines or with “online first” articles in the case of scholarly journals. Some features of the print newspaper such as weather reports and sports scores have become ephemeral in the electronic versions, appearing only to be replaced by more current information. Electronic publications of all stripes provide “online only” content, especially audio and video clips and streams. Scholarly journals increasingly provide supplementary online content such as datasets and 3D models, content that is impossible to include in the print version. Finally, certain online content is made freely available without a subscription while other content in the

same publication remains behind a paywall. All this makes the cataloging of electronic serials increasingly “interesting.”

Ongoing Directories

Ongoing directories exemplify a type of publication that was really waiting for the arrival of the online world. The content is intended to be as up-to-date as possible. Directories have a certain formal structure: each entry consists of a defined set of elements (e.g., name, address, telephone number) arranged either alphabetically by name or classified by some criterion, such as businesses classified by the services they offer. The entry corresponds to a record, the arrangement to an index, an incipient structure waiting for the invention of the electronic database.

Library handling of telephone directories provides a useful example of the trajectory of directories through three successive formats. Initially, directories were produced in print and supplied gratis by telephone companies to their customers, including libraries. At one point, a micrographics company named Bell & Howell discovered it could sell libraries a much larger set of telephone directories than they could collect by themselves by reproducing their page images on microfiches and charging libraries for an annual subscription. They called this product Phonefiche. Libraries got much more content occupying much less physical space and at an acceptable cost to the library in both money and maintenance, so everyone was happy. With the arrival of the World Wide Web, telephone directories migrated online into a single mammoth freely accessible database, and the Phonefiche became instantly obsolete. At the same time, the telephone directory as serial headed for obsolescence, replaced by an online monster that today often contains not just an individual’s address and telephone number but much personal information, which the subject is surprised—if not alarmed—to discover is only a few clicks away. With these changes, libraries got out of the business of collecting telephone directories.

Annual Reports

Annual reports are examples of serials that sometimes—especially in the case of corporate annual reports—don’t really have titles but we pretend that they do. This is because the intended audiences of these annual reports—shareholders, for example—receive them whether they want them or not. Others may request the annual report and, no

matter what it's called, the organization will know just what to send the requester. From the point of view of the issuing body, the purpose of the cover is to visually impress the audience, and an actual title is a secondary consideration. In fact, it's not uncommon for annual reports to lack a title altogether (in which case the name of the organization, however it appears on the report, becomes the default title—a sort of cataloger's revenge).

Similar publications (in terms of unstable or absent titles) include newsletters sent to contributors to charities or to members of clubs, etc.

Newspapers

Newspapers first appeared in the early days of printing when printers realized that, rather than printing a special broadsheet every time something interesting happened, they could make more money by printing one regularly, regardless of whether anything interesting had happened. The first such, published December 2, 1620, had the fetching title *The New Tydings Out of Italie Are Not Yet Com*. (For the etymologically inclined, “tydings” is cognate with the German “Zeitung” [newspaper].)

The first real newspaper in English is said to have been the *London Gazette*. It began publication in 1665 in Oxford, whither the court had retired to escape the Plague, but returned to London in time to cover the Great Fire three years later. It is still being published today but is much less interesting, being mainly a vehicle for official government announcements.

Newspapers have a distinctive format in that the text begins on the first page, just under the title. Older newspapers often filled this valuable real estate with classified advertising, reflecting an editorial judgment on what was most likely to entice the customer, especially on slow news days (which were most days). For catalogers, one consequence of the typical newspaper layout is that titles of newspapers are invariably caption titles—titles appearing at the top of the text—with other details of publication appearing either in the masthead (a special box on an inside page reserved for such stuff) or the colophon (the bottom of one of the last pages).⁵

Monographic Series

Cataloging a group of monographs as a series is sometimes a tricky business because it is often not clear whether the items constitute a series or not. But to paraphrase comedian Tom Lehrer, “when correctly viewed, everything’s a series,” and historically serials catalogers have done their best to shoehorn as many publications as possible into this category, especially research reports and such generated in huge numbers by government agencies and research institutions. It is a lot cheaper to check in RR1975-035 as one of 2,500 research reports represented in the series *RR (Freedonia. Ministry of War)* than to catalog it as a monograph (along with each of its 2,499 fellows). Twinges of conscience occur only when someone impertinently asks whether anyone would ever actually be looking for one of these reports under such a contrived title. Fortunately, in an online world in which individual research reports are often freely available under their individual titles—bypassing the library catalog altogether—catalogers are confronted with this unhappy choice less and less often.

Statistical Serials

Statistical publications have been around as long as writing systems, for which one of the first purposes was to make a record of what the ruler owned and what the ruled owed. When this information began to be recorded periodically, the first statistical serial was born.

Statistical serials are an example of a class of publication that moves in and out of the serial model. Because they consist of data, statistical serials have been particularly susceptible to disruption by online migration. A publication that appears in print as page after page of massive tables in stately progression, brought together in successive monthly issues (perhaps with an annual cumulation), is represented online instead by a downloadable spreadsheet file, often made up of multiple sheets, the whole being replaced each month in its entirety. Or perhaps it is represented by a gradually accruing database containing all the data back to the beginning, the tables to be derived according to the whim of the user. Or perhaps by some combination of these, along with PDFs of issues of the still extant print publication. Online the once proud statistical serial may have been absorbed into a single overarching data website, no longer retaining its distinctive title, its unique data now part of a great data pool. The data may now be available for use by other applications entirely outside the originating organization—something especially likely with government data. In these cases, the serial

experiences something of an existential crisis: What have I become? Do I still exist? Statistical serials are more likely than others to exist today in the murky middle ground between serials and ongoing integrating resources, exhibiting characteristics of both and of neither, leaving it to the serials cataloger to determine which predominates.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF SERIALS CATALOGING

So, welcome to the world of serials cataloging! And specifically, welcome to the world of serials cataloging using RDA. The remainder of this chapter will try to reassure you that however you're feeling, you are not the first to be faced with a new or revised cataloging code. This has happened before. The path is well trodden, and the questions we confront today are similar to the questions serials catalogers have confronted in the past, only—these being serials—different.

Much like serials themselves, serials cataloging has changed over the years, often in quite remarkable ways. Given this fact, it is useful to know where we've come from, if only to get a better idea of how we got where we are. In the following brief survey, we will discover that our current practice reflects not eternal verities but, rather, the practical adaptations we have made over time to changes in our catalogs and changes in the materials we catalog: serials.

Until 1967 (1971 in the United States), a serial was defined by the continuity of its numbering.⁶ No matter how often the title changed, a serial was treated as a unit if the numbering was continuous from one title to the next. Likewise, if a serial was entered under the name of a corporate body, no matter how often the name of the body changed—so long as it was essentially the same body—a serial was treated as a unit if the numbering was continuous from name to name (or if issues were distinguished by dates rather than by numbers).

After 1967 (1971 in the United States), a new serial was deemed to exist whenever the title changed or the name of the body under which it was entered changed, regardless of whether the numbering was continuous. Although this change in cataloging practice occurred more than fifty years ago, in some ways, we are still living with its consequences.

How did it happen? Why was one way of cataloging serials dominant from the beginning of cataloging to the late twentieth century, and why has another way been dominant since? Were they crazy? Are we crazy? If we look back, we can see that the answer to both questions is no, but we can also gain an understanding of how and why cataloging practice changes over time.

Although modern Anglo-American cataloging practice can be said to begin with the ninety-one *Rules for the Compilation of the Catalogue* developed for the British Museum's Department of Printed Books (1841), those rules were but the first of a cacophony of competing cataloging codes to emerge over the course of the nineteenth century. Everyone who was anyone produced a cataloging code. To spare you, I will here ignore all nineteenth-century codes but one, the most influential in the United States: Cutter's Rules, first published in 1876.

Cutter

The year 1876 saw the founding of the American Library Association (ALA) and the centennial of American independence, and in that year, Charles Ammi Cutter published his *Rules for a Printed Dictionary Catalogue* (part II of his magisterial *Public Libraries in the United States of America: Their History, Condition, and Management*). Built on a diversity of earlier cataloging codes, Cutter's code would provide the foundation for all that followed.

Hard as it is to imagine, serials in those days came in just one format: print. No online versions, no microforms, no CD-ROMS, no downloadable audio, etc. Just print. There was little to complicate serials cataloging other than constraints imposed by the form of the catalog.

In 1876, the predominant form of library catalog was the *book catalog*. This was not a catalog of books but, rather, a catalog that was itself a book (often running to several volumes), and one that needed to be continually kept up-to-date. A book catalog was typically maintained in manuscript—at least the working copy—though printed catalogs of the more important libraries were common. This was both for convenience, because copies could be available at several points in the library, and as a source of revenue, because other libraries would pay good money to know what you owned. When entries were made or amended, there was a strong incentive to minimize the impact on the physical catalog. Real estate in book catalogs was expensive. If a serial mischievously changed its title, it was easiest in such a catalog to continue using the existing entry under the old title and indicate the change of title in a note, with a reference or added entry made under the new title at the appropriate place in the catalog. (This reference or added entry might be made directly on the page if there was space, or via a slip of paper “tipped in” if there was not.) Cutter set out this practice of *earliest-entry cataloging* for periodicals in his rule 54, along with an alternative practice of entering “each part” under its own (successive) title.⁷

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