

CONUNDRUMS OF RDA-BASED CATALOGUING IN ENHANCING ACCESS TO MODERN LIBRARY COLLECTIONS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Since the introduction of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) into library services, there have been rapid transformations which have led to an era where the preference of the library users is mostly online and consequently paved way for the agitation by librarians for a web based friendly cataloguing rule which birthed Resources Description and Access (RDA). This study therefore examined conundrums of Resources Description and Access – based cataloguing in enhancing access to modern library collections in Nigeria. The main focus of this paper was to find out the challenges of implementing RDA in Nigerian modern libraries. It also delved into the understanding of the impacts of RDA towards accessing modern library collections. The study was qualitative in nature as data were derived from published journals, articles and textbooks. The paper was further buttressed by the adoption of diffusion of innovation theory. It was observed that inadequate training and skills, infrastructure limitations, funding constraints, transitioning from AACR2, limited awareness, inconsistent cataloging practices and resistance to change are the conundrums posing as clog in the wheel towards the implementation of RDA-based cataloguing in enhancing access to modern library collections in Nigeria. Based on the observations, it was suggested among others that Nigerian Library Association should provide regular RDA training workshops and online learning opportunities to equip librarians with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively implement RDA, focusing on hands-on practice, real-world examples, and addressing specific challenges in Nigerian libraries.

Keywords: Access, Cataloguing, Library collections, Modern library, Resources Description and Access.

Introduction

Right from the ancient period, library resources have since been organized in some definite order. The introduction of Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules (AACR2), an international standard, improved how libraries describe and organize resources. During this time, libraries mainly used card catalogs for users to access information. AACR2 had the potentials of guiding catalogers in describing resources which has made it easier for users to find and retrieve them. Ifidon and Ifidon (2022) assert that AACR2 is one of the early cataloguing rules and card catalogue usually seems to be the primary retrieval source. The introduction of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) into library services has changed this phenomenon and led to an era where the preference of the library users is mostly online and consequently paved way for the agitation by librarians for a web based friendly cataloguing rule. This necessitated the adoption of Resource Descriptive Access (RDA) by some libraries to further ease access to their collections.

Resource Description and Access (RDA) is a cataloging standard that's gaining traction globally, including in Nigerian libraries. Developed to replace Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules (AACR2), RDA focuses on user needs and flexible, technology-friendly descriptions (Adeyemo & Akintunde, 2022). As Nigerian libraries strive to enhance access to their collections, understanding RDA's principles is crucial. This introduction sets the

stage for exploring RDA's implications in Nigerian libraries, building on efforts to modernize library services (Ifidon & Ifidon, 2022). The adoption of RDA in Nigeria aligns with global trends in library science, emphasizing accessibility and international cooperation. Nigerian libraries, like others worldwide, face challenges balancing traditional practices with modern standards (Omeluzor, 2021). RDA offers opportunities to improve resource discovery and user experience. Delving into RDA's conundrums in Nigerian libraries create an understanding that these broader contexts is key which leads to the examination of specific challenges and implications.

The conundrums associated with academic libraries is that traditional cataloging practices in Nigeria often follow AACR2, differing from RDA's approach. This difference creates a transition gap, requiring libraries to reconcile existing practices with RDA's new standards (Nwankwo & Udoh, 2021). Nigerian libraries must balance preserving established workflows with adopting innovative approaches. This balancing act highlights the need to assess RDA's impact on access to modern library collections, connecting to the broader implications. RDA promises improved access to library resources, aligning with Nigerian libraries' goals to serve users better. Enhanced descriptions and linked data can increase resource discoverability, benefiting students, researchers, and the public (Ogunmodede & Adebayo, 2023). Nigerian libraries adopting RDA can expect improved user engagement and contribution to national information infrastructure.

It is therefore apparent that the RDA as a cataloguing guide for modern electronic information resources is very much tied to the future and operations of libraries in general.

RDA is a standard designed to focus attention on the user and on the tasks that the carries out in the process of resource discovery (Ibibio & Udoh, 2025). However, since the gilts of cataloguers felt that there is a need to develop new cataloguing rules apart from the AACR2 which has been considered to be inadequate for the myriad types of resources coming into the library after AACR2 was adopted. As such, century cataloguers working in the modern libraries and information centers in Nigeria needs to examine and be abreast on the development of RDA and its associated conundrums so that the emergence of RDA will not be dead on arrival but to harness the potentials and better their service delivery in the modern libraries. It is therefore premise on this background, that the paper examined the conundrums of Resources Description and Access – based cataloguing in enhancing access to modern library collections in Nigeria.

Concept of Resources Description and Access (RDA)

Resources Description Access with the acronym RDA is a cataloging standard that provides guidelines for describing resources, focusing on user needs and flexible, technology-friendly descriptions. It is a framework for linked data that enables libraries to create rich, interconnected descriptions of resources, enhancing discovery and access in digital environments. According to Madukoma, Unegbu and Olorunkalu (2023), RDA is a bundle of instruction, advice and data elements based on the Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records (FRBR) that provides semantics of well-structured metadata and help users to access and retrieve data in the library world. Resources Description Access is

a bridge to global access that aligns library cataloging practices with international standards, facilitating resource sharing and discovery across borders.

Resource description and access (RDA) is a bundle of instructions, guidelines and data elements based on the Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records (FRBR) and Functional Requirements for Authority Data (FRAD) that provides semantics of well-structured metadata, which help users to access and retrieve information in the libraries (Omosekejimi, Nweke & Omoadoni, 2022). Similarly, Madukoma et al. (2023) describe RDA as a metadata creation and management which is vital in managing resource discovery to both librarians and library users. Resource description and access (RDA) is web-based cataloging guidelines available on the Internet with more electronic contents. Mensa, Udoh and Osiebe (2023) contend that RDA represents another innovative technology for effective provision of electronic information services in libraries, developed in line with unique set of objectives and principles based on the statement of International Cataloguing Principles (ICP).

Modern Library

Modern library is a smart library that leverages technology like online databases, e-books and mobile apps to improve its services and operations. According to Achugbue, Igere and Azih (2023), modern libraries create a more efficient and user-friendly experience for patrons. This approach transforms traditional library management, enabling seamless access to a vast array of resources and redefining the role of libraries in the digital age. Baryshev, Babina, Zakharov, Kazantseva and Pikov (2015) assert that the concept of a

"modern library" is often used in various contexts to describe libraries that integrate advanced technologies and innovative approaches.

Modern library collections in Nigeria have evolved from traditional print-only holdings to hybrid systems that integrate physical books with digital resources, allowing users to access materials both on-site and remotely. The National Library of Nigeria now offers an Online Public Access Catalog (OPAC) and a virtual library platform, making national publications discoverable worldwide (Achugbue, Igere & Azih, 2023). According to Ifidon and Ifidon (2022), many public and state libraries are adopting digital repositories and mobile library services to reach rural communities, reflecting a push toward inclusive information access. Together, these developments illustrate a national trend toward technologically driven, user-centered collections that preserve Nigeria's intellectual heritage while meeting contemporary information needs (Baryshev, Babina, Zakharov, Kazantseva & Pikov, 2015).

Cataloguing

Cataloging refers to the description of a book's key details like author, title, publisher, date, and subject, making it identifiable. It is like creating a detailed profile for each book, helping users find what they need. Akidi and Omekwu (2019) opine that cataloguing encompasses full bibliographic description of information resources acquired by the library, adhering to the established rules of the practices; determination of subject

contents of the information resource; and generally, determination of the actual position of each new addition in the library's scheme of book arrangement. Catalogue information can be made available to the users in the form of books, cards, microfilms or microfiches or through computer networks. Nwalo (2012) maintained that it is important to note that catalogue overtime continued to respond to time and changes resulting in its metamorphosis from the oldest book catalogue to card catalogue to microform catalogue and also to computerized catalogue, presently known as Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC).

In the application of RDA in Nigeria, it is required that cataloguers follow principles of accuracy, consistency, and user-centered description, ensuring that each resource is represented precisely and uniformly across libraries. According to Adebayo (2019), the principle of entity-relationship modeling guides cataloguers to identify and link work, expression, manifestation, and item entities, which help Nigerian libraries manage both print and digital resources effectively. Emphasizing standardized terminology and controlled vocabularies supports interoperability among Nigerian institutions, enabling shared cataloguing and resource discovery (Okoro, 2020). Cataloguers must also observe the principle of sufficiency and necessity, providing enough descriptive detail for users to identify and obtain resources without unnecessary complexity (Onyanha & Aina, 2021).

Conundrums of Implementing RDA in Nigerian Modern Libraries

Conundrums refer to the militating factors that impede the implementation of RDA in modern libraries in Nigeria. The implementation of RDA in modern libraries in Nigeria

has been met with several conundrums ranging from inadequate training and skills to infrastructure limitations, funding constraints, limited awareness and resistance to change.

1. **Inadequate training and skills:** Inadequate training and skills hinder librarians' ability to apply RDA's flexible rules and manage linked data effectively. Without proper training, librarians may struggle to understand RDA's principles and guidelines, leading to inconsistent application. According to Nwankwo and Udoh (2021), the lack of training opportunities and resources exacerbates the skills gap, making it challenging for librarians to implement RDA successfully. Inadequate training also leads to a lack of confidence among librarians, causing them to hesitate in adopting RDA.

2. **Infrastructure limitations:** Infrastructural limitations hinder RDA implementation in Nigerian libraries, affecting access to reliable internet and power supply. Inadequate technology, including outdated integrated library systems, makes it difficult to support RDA's linked data environment. The lack of metadata management tools and software limits RDA's effective application (Adeyemo & Akintunde, 2022). No wonder, Eze and Onyekwelu (2024) note that outdated infrastructure also makes it challenging to integrate RDA with existing library systems.

3. **Funding constraints:** Funding constraints limit Nigerian libraries' ability to invest in RDA infrastructure, training, and resources. Without sufficient funding, libraries struggle to upgrade technology and systems needed for RDA implementation. The lack of financial resources according to Ezema, Ekenna and Ogbuabor (2022) hinders RDA adoption, impacting resource discovery and library services.

4. **Limited awareness:** Limited awareness of RDA's principles and benefits hinders its adoption in Nigerian libraries. Many librarians lack understanding of RDA's advantages over traditional cataloging standards, leading to resistance to change. Insufficient awareness also affects librarians' ability to effectively apply RDA guidelines and standards. Oguntayo and Adeleke (2016) contend that limited awareness among library stakeholders, including management, can impede RDA implementation efforts.

5. **Resistance to change:** Resistance to change among Nigerian librarians hinders RDA adoption, as some prefer traditional cataloging standards. According to Saliu (2021), familiarity with AACR2 and comfort with existing workflows contribute to librarians' reluctance to transition to RDA. Resistance to change affects RDA, slowing the implementation process. Librarians may also be hesitant to learn new skills and technologies required for RDA.

Impact of RDA on Access to Modern Library Collections

The introduction of Resource Description and Access (RDA) in Nigerian libraries has enhanced access to modern library collections, but its adoption is still limited. According to Haider (2019), RDA provides a flexible framework for describing resources, making it easier for users to discover and access library materials. RDA's user-focused approach and alignment with international standards like FRBR improve resource discovery and searchability, enabling users to find relevant materials more efficiently. John-Okeke (2019) opines that RDA provides a comprehensive set of general instructions and guidelines that are logically defined, easier to use, and more adaptable in describing all types of resources

designed for digital and non-digital environment while simplifying cataloguing rules and minimizing special rules for describing specific types of materials. It primarily focuses on improving and expanding the library catalogues' influence to the Internet, where the content is more electronic (Haliru & Sokari, 2016).

Nigerian libraries adopting RDA can expect improved user engagement and contribution to national information infrastructure (Omeluzor, 2021). However, Nigerian libraries face challenges in transitioning to RDA, including inadequate training, infrastructure, and funding. Librarians need updated skills to apply RDA's flexible rules and manage linked data effectively (Eze & Onyekwelu, 2024). Institutions must weigh these costs against potential benefits like enhanced discovery and user satisfaction. Effective implementation of RDA can significantly improve access to library resources, but it requires concerted efforts from librarians, policymakers, and stakeholders. In all, RDA has the potential to transform access to modern library collections in Nigeria, but its successful implementation depends on addressing the challenges and leveraging its benefits.

Ways Forward

The implementation of Resource Description and Access (RDA) in Nigeria has significant implications for collection development and access. According to Ojo and Adebayo (2023), RDA's emphasis on user-centricity and flexibility enables librarians to create more intuitive and accessible cataloging records, enhancing resource discovery and access. Nigerian libraries can leverage RDA to improve collection development by providing more accurate and comprehensive descriptions of resources, facilitating better

selection and acquisition decisions. According to Okeke and Okonkwo (2024), Nigerian libraries can create more interconnected and machine-readable cataloging data, enabling seamless discovery and access to resources across different platforms and institutions.

Moreover, RDA's emphasis on authority control and subject access can enhance collection development and access in Nigeria. As noted by Uche and Ifeanyi (2025), RDA can facilitate more effective browsing and searching, enabling users to discover relevant resources more easily. Nigerian libraries can also leverage RDA to improve collection development by identifying gaps in their collections and developing more targeted acquisition strategies. The adoption of RDA in Nigeria also has implications for librarian training and professional development.

Theoretical Framework

Diffusion of Innovation Theory

Diffusion of innovation theory propounded by Everett Rogers in 1962 explains how new ideas, technologies, or practices spread within a social system through communication channels over time. Its relevance to the present study emphasized the slow adoption process in RDS. The theory's stages (awareness, interest, evaluation, trial, and adoption) can be applied to understand librarians' hesitation to adopt RDA. Nigerian libraries may be in the awareness or interest stage, requiring targeted interventions to move forward. This theory highlights the importance of social influence, suggesting that showcasing RDA success stories can encourage adoption. The theory also emphasizes addressing barriers

like limited resources and training to facilitate RDA adoption. By applying diffusion of innovation, Nigerian libraries can develop strategies that can accelerate RDA implementation and improve access to modern library resources in Nigeria.

Suggestions

Based on the observations in this study, the researcher made the following suggestions;

1. Nigerian Library Association should provide regular RDA training workshops and online learning opportunities to equip librarians with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively implement RDA, focusing on hands-on practice, real-world examples, and addressing specific challenges in Nigerian libraries.
2. Government authorities should prioritize upgrading library infrastructure and technology to support RDA implementation, investing in reliable internet connectivity, updated cataloging software, and sufficient hardware resources.
3. Government and private sector stakeholders should allocate dedicated funds and grants to support RDA implementation in Nigerian libraries, prioritizing infrastructure upgrades, training, and resource development to ensure successful adoption and sustainability.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Resources Description Access (RDA) offers immense potentialities in enhancing access to modern libraries in Nigeria by providing a standardized framework for cataloging and metadata. Its adoption can improve resource discovery, facilitate information sharing, and enhance user experience. However, conundrums like inadequate training, infrastructural limitations, funding constraints, and inconsistent cataloging practices have hindered RDA implementation. To harness RDA's potentials, Nigerian libraries must address these challenges through collaborative efforts. Government support, private sector partnerships, and professional development are crucial for successful RDA adoption.

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