

**To:** Robert Maxwell and Adam Schiff, NARDAC Representatives to the RSC

**From:** Amanda Sprochi, Chair, Committee on Cataloging: Description and Access (CC:DA)

**Subject:** CC:DA Response to RSC Religions Working Group (ReligionsWG) Proposal  
RSC/ReligionsWG/2023/2

## Background

RSC/ReligionsWG/2023/2 seeks to change instructions to eliminate Christian and Western bias in the RDA Toolkit. The Working Group states RSC/ReligionsWG/2023/2 complements RSC/ReligionsWG/2023/1 which proposed eliminating instructions for adding additional elements and designations in access points for persons, including religious titles such as pope, antipope, bishop, etc., which are Christian and Catholic in origin.

## Response

RSC/ReligionsWG/2023/2 Recommendation 2 deletes the instructions for Popes and Bishops, etc. from base RDA and moves them to Community Resources. CC:DA still stands by its response to ReligionsWG/2023/1. This recommendation goes counter to the CC:DA recommendation that the instructions point to other existing guidance under Term of Rank or Honour in base RDA to justify the recording of these elements. If this recommendation is approved, we would like to ensure that the current instructions can be included in the ALA community resources or policy statements.

CC:DA suggests that some exemplars for the treatment of religious titles be included in RDA in the available examples. The inclusion of the current rules for popes and bishops gave very concrete, if limited, use cases of how to handle religious terms of address and clarified the instructions. Given the impenetrable nature of the newest version of RDA, we would suggest that properly ecumenical examples be included in RDA for guidance.

In RSC/ReligionsWG/2023/2, Recommendation 1 proposes a change to the definition of **Term of rank or honour or office** in the glossary and Toolkit text to make it applicable to all religions. The current definition is: A word or phrase indicative of royalty, nobility, ecclesiastical rank, office, or a term of address for a person of religious vocation. The new definition eliminates the term “ecclesiastical”: A word or phrase indicative of royalty, nobility, rank, office, or a term of address for a person of religious vocation.

CC:DA suggests that the definition be rewritten to eliminate parallelism:

### **Term of rank or honour or office**

A word or phrase indicative of royalty, nobility, rank, or office.  
Includes a term of address for a person of religious vocation.

CC:DA questions the use of the term “civil” in paragraph two:

A term of rank, honour, or office, includes initials or abbreviations representing an academic degree, or membership in an organization, and excludes civil terms of address that simply indicate gender or marital status such as Mr. or Mrs.

The inclusion of “civil” in “excludes civil terms of address that simply indicate gender or marital status such as Mr. or Mrs” seems unnecessary. It is not clear what is considered a civil term of address. Qualifying “terms of address” implies there are other terms of address that simply indicate gender or marital status that could be recorded, but it is not clear what those terms are. Therefore, the original instruction seems clear: “excludes terms of address that simply indicate gender or marital status such as Mr. or Mrs.” The addition of "civil" before terms of address raises more questions about what could be considered a "civil term of address" than it clarifies, therefore CC:DA recommends "civil" be removed from the proposed definition and scope.

CC:DA suggests that some exemplars for the treatment of religious titles be included in RDA in the available examples. The inclusion of the current rules for popes and bishops gave very concrete, if limited, use cases of how to handle religious terms of address and clarified the instructions. Given the impenetrable nature of the newest version of RDA, we would suggest that properly ecumenical examples be included in RDA for guidance.

Recommendation 3 revises the instruction for **Other persons of religious vocation** (28.93.03.66) so it is applicable for all persons rather than those who do not have a term of ecclesiastical rank and to allow for recording multiple terms as multiple instances of this element. The Working Group’s proposed text:

#### **OPTION**

Record a term of rank, office, or address in a language in which the term was conferred, in a language used in a country in which the person resides, or in a language preferred by the creator of the metadata.

The proposed option 1 introduces inconsistencies with the option under **Other term of rank, honour, or office** (88.07.44.56). To be consistent with existing RDA instructions the text should read:

#### **OPTION**

Record a term of rank, office, or address in the language in which the term was conferred, in a language used in the country in which the person resides, or in a language preferred by the agent who creates the metadata.

Proposed option 2 under **Other term of rank, honour, or office** (88.07.44.56) should be changed. It currently reads:

#### **OPTION**

Record a term in the language in which it was conferred or in a language used in the country in which a person resides.

CC:DA suggests the text be changed to read:

#### **OPTION**

Record a term in a language in which it was conferred or in a language used in a country in which a person resides

The changes which make it possible to record multiple terms have support.

In sum, CC:DA continues to maintain that religious titles should not be treated differently than other terms of rank or honour in RDA. The recommendations of RSC/ReligionsWG/2023/2 are generally sound, provided that appropriate examples using religious terms of rank be included in RDA for guidance and that rules and examples for specific religious titles such as pope or bishop be permitted to move to policy statements and community guidance where wanted.