

Copac Contributor RDA Survey 2012: Summary

Shirley Cousins, Mimas, 2nd July 2012

Introduction

At Copac we have been taking an interest in RDA and related developments for the past few years, but this has been very much a sideline activity. However, when the Library of Congress announced the results of their RDA trial and the British Library followed with their own timetable for moving to RDA we decided it was time to consider the implications for the RLUK database and Copac service in more detail.

Anything we do in relation to the RLUK database will be agreed in collaboration with RLUK and the member libraries, whilst we also need to talk with our other contributors regarding their views on this change to RDA as this will impact directly on Copac. So to get things started we carried out a short survey, from 13th April to the 2nd July, to get an impression of what our contributing libraries are planning.

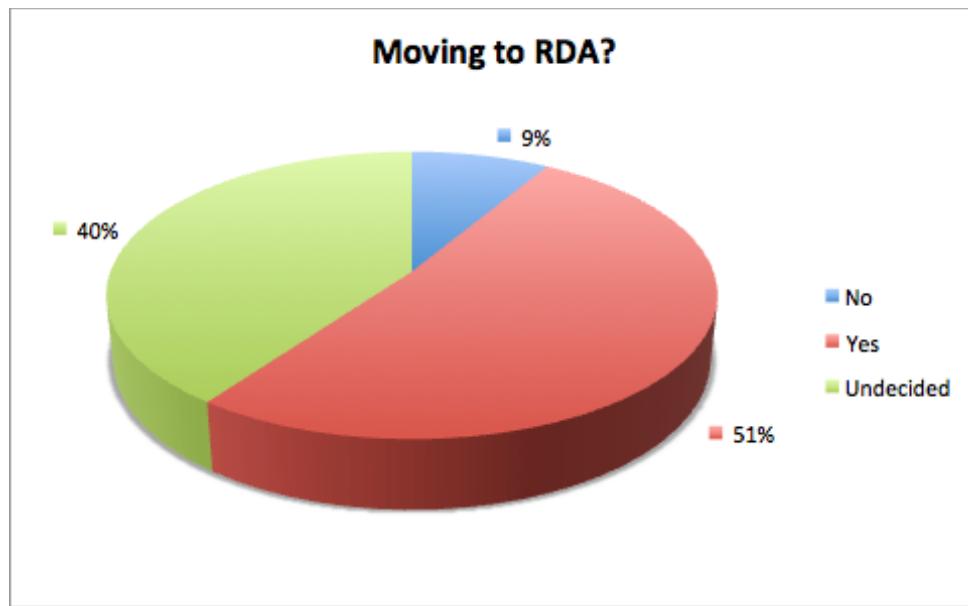
We received 35 responses out of c.70 contributors. This divided roughly into 20 larger academic institutions and 15 smaller specialist institutions.

Our first question was to ask whether a library is currently using AACR2 for cataloguing, as we felt we couldn't take this for granted. And indeed one specialist institution said 'no', but all other libraries are currently using AACR2 so they are generally starting from the same place.

Moving to RDA

In terms of their current plans, we asked our contributors 'Are you planning to move to cataloguing with RDA?'.

Of the 18 who said 'yes' most were larger academic libraries, whilst of the 14 who were undecided half were smaller institutions. The 3 institutions that said 'No' were all smaller specialist institutions.

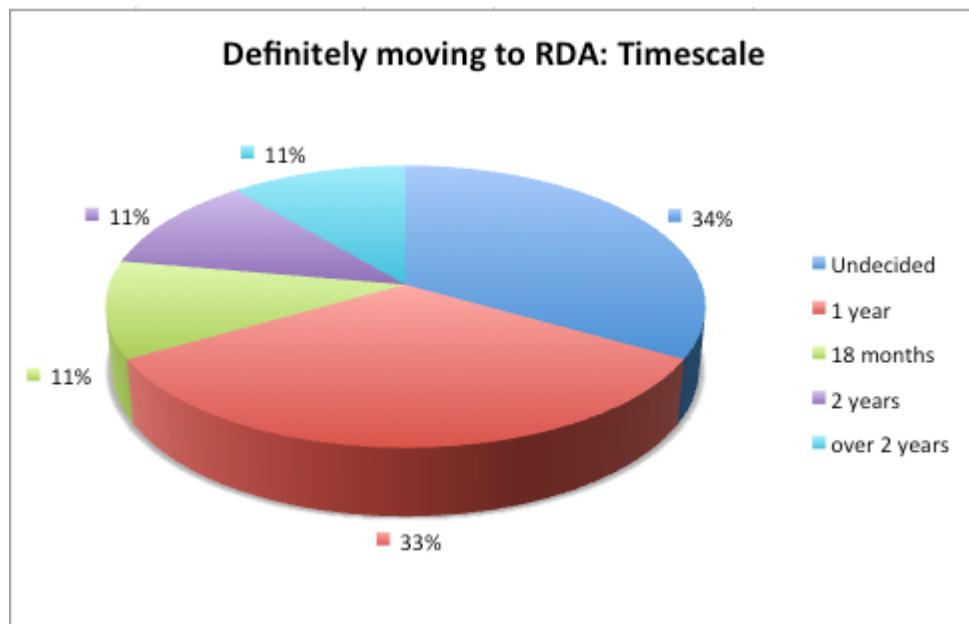


Being undecided in some cases reflected a library's stage of decision making, that RDA was under active consideration but there was no final decision. In other cases libraries might feel they didn't yet know enough about it, or that their decisions would be affected by wider factors.

Timescale for RDA move

For those 18 libraries that *have* decided to move to RDA we asked “please tell us what your timescale is likely to be”.

We are clearly going to be supporting AACR2 for some time to come as the responses indicate that this is a process that will be happening over a number of years. There were 6 libraries moving within a year, with a further 2 libraries in each of ‘18 months’, ‘2 years’, and ‘over 2 years’. There were also 6 libraries as yet undecided on their timescale. The early adopters were all academic institutions.

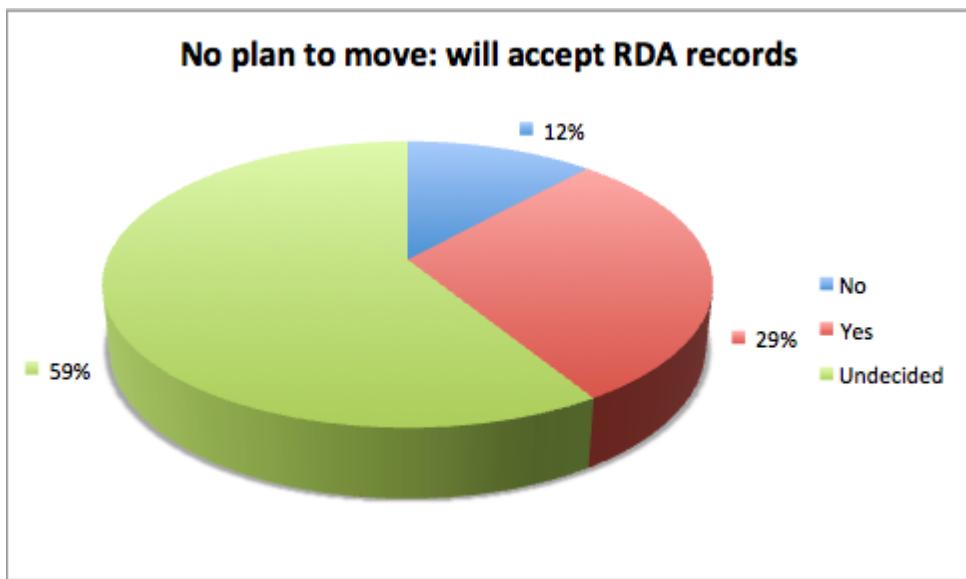


Accept RDA records

For those libraries who had no current plans to move to RDA we wanted to know ‘will you accept records catalogued using RDA into your local catalogue?’.

Of the 17 libraries in this category only 2 said no – with the note that both are specialised institutions with little or no use of outside record sources. There were 5 institutions said yes, of which 4 were large academic institutions; 9 libraries were as yet undecided, whilst 1 didn’t respond.

This is clearly an area where libraries are likely to need to carry out testing and in particularly smaller libraries expressed uncertainty here, as they may not yet have had the opportunity to explore the implications of this decision on their local catalogue.



General comments about moving to RDA

In asking an open question about the libraries views on the move to RDA there were some very interesting comments.

For some of the smaller libraries there was a feeling that, given their scale of activity, the change wasn't compelling. And more generally, if they were to cope with this type of change they would prefer to come in later rather than trying to be an early adopter. However there was certainly a desire for some in keeping in step with the wider research library and academic library community.

A number of libraries commented that they were looking at where the library system suppliers were going with RDA and that this would be a major factor in when, or whether, to move to RDA, or to accept RDA records within their catalogue. In some cases a decision about RDA is explicitly being considered as part of plans for their next library system move. However, there was also the view that it may be some time before the benefits of RDA are likely to be seen within the catalogue.

Some libraries are already well involved in planning for RDA. Even where there is no immediate decision to move to RDA some have been experimenting with RDA records within their catalogue and making decisions about short-term retention and long-term use of some of the new data in the records. However for others at an early stage of thinking about RDA there was a sense they felt a need for more information about what other UK libraries are doing, as well as more coordinated training and support. And not everyone is, as yet, convinced as to the benefits of the move.

Involvement with consortia and the decisions made by other libraries were mentioned as influences regarding any move to RDA. In particular, for some libraries the change timelines of the British Library and Library of Congress are important drivers, both in terms of the decision to change to RDA and the timing of that change. Whilst for other libraries it is likely to be an overall change in the library environment and taking in increasing numbers of RDA records through shared cataloguing, that seems most likely to drive a move to RDA.

Training was, of course, mentioned as a problem area and it was noted that the current funding constraints imposed additional pressures in this area. Interestingly,

there was also concern expressed as to the necessity for staff to get to grips with the underlying conceptual model in order to work effectively with RDA in the longer term, perhaps seen as imposing a greater training burden.

And whilst the issue of dealing with legacy data was raised, the potential for longer-term benefits in moving towards linked data was also noted.

Next steps

Many thanks to all those libraries that participated by filling in the questionnaire.

At Copac we will follow the lead of the early adopters and we will be reviewing the implications of RDA over the next year. Initially we will be focused on the way our services may need to adapt in the short term in response to the move to RDA and we will work with RLUK and our other contributors to take this forward. In the longer term we are interested in exploring the benefits this move to RDA may bring to our user communities.

If you have any questions about the survey please get in touch with the Copac helpdesk at copac@mimas.ac.uk