

RDA Refresher Performance Support: Transcription of Core Elements

In RDA, great emphasis is placed on “transcription” of manifestation elements. This document provides guidance on what exactly that means, focusing on the Core Elements.

What does Transcription Mean?

“Transcription” is not defined in the RDA Glossary, or anywhere in RDA. But we can talk about what it means, in a practical sense.

When you are told to ‘transcribe’ an element, type the data as it appears on the resource as much as your agency permits. Note that transcription applies to the *content* of the data, not to *font features and typography*. The LC-PCC PSs have provisions for romanizing non-Latin scripts (1.4). Special letters, diacritical marks, and marks of punctuation are also covered in LC-PCC PS 1.4. Symbols that cannot or should not be reproduced are discussed in LC-PCC PS 1.7.5.

Examples:

Title proper on source:	A history of π
Transcribed:	A history of [pi] [Greek letter adjusted per PS for 1.4]
Edition statement on source:	1 ^a edizione
Transcribed:	1a edizione [superscript letter adjusted per PS for 1.4]
Publisher's name on source:	<i>Datalink Global</i> TM
Transcribed:	Datalink Global [italics ignored per PS for 1.4; trademark symbol ignored per PS for 1.7.5]

The RDA policy on capitalization (1.7.2) says to follow Appendix A, which requires adjustments to the appearance of the data, but not the content. However, according to LC-PCC PS 1.7.1, 1st Alternative, you may either follow App. A, or transcribe the capitalization found on the source.

So, for practical purposes, “transcribe” means ‘do not make adjustments to the data beyond those specified in RDA and the LC-PCC PSs.’ If a word is abbreviated, transcribe it as it appears -- abbreviated. If a word is not abbreviated, transcribe it as it appears -- not abbreviated. Unless otherwise instructed, transcribe misspellings as they appear on the source. If you think “transcribing what you see” will result in data that is potentially confusing for users, you can use fields such as the 246 and 500 to help users find and identify the resource.

- It may help to consider that *Manifestation* elements – covered in Chapter 2 – are *very often* transcribed, while *Expression and Work Elements* – covered in Chapter 6 – are *not* transcribed. If you think about the FRBR entities, this makes sense. For example, the *title proper* is a *Manifestation* element, covered in Chapter 2, and is *transcribed*; while the *preferred title* is a *Work* element, covered in Chapter 6, and is *not transcribed* (of course, the preferred title might be the same as the title proper. But they are, technically, two different elements. The title proper is transcribed from the source; the preferred title is determined by the cataloger, and often involves bibliographic investigation.

General Guidelines and Policies

The general guidelines are in RDA 1.7, which states:

“The instructions in chapters 2–4 specify transcription of certain elements as they appear on the source of information.”

1.7 then breaks down into subtopics such as capitalization, punctuation, diacritical marks, spacing of initials and acronyms, abbreviations, and inaccuracies.¹ For example, 1.7.3 says, “Transcribe punctuation as it appears on the source,” and 1.7.4 says, “Transcribe diacritical marks such as accents as they appear on the source of information.”

Examples:

Title proper on source:	ROMEO AND JULIET
Transcribed:	ROMEO AND JULIET
	or
	Romeo and Juliet [capitalization adjusted per App. A]
Publisher's name on source:	A. L. A. Publishing
Transcribed:	A.L.A. Publishing [spaces between initials omitted per 1.7.6]

But do not assume that you should ALWAYS transcribe ALL elements as they appear on the source. For example, 1.7.9 says, “When instructed to transcribe an element as it appears on the source, transcribe an inaccuracy or a misspelled word unless the instructions for a specific element indicate otherwise.” You need to carefully apply *each* instruction for *each* element.

In addition to RDA 1.7, it is important that you read and understand LC-PCC PS 1.7.1. This Policy Statement is very extensive, but well-organized, and it is important that you understand all the sections of it, and carefully apply its provisions.

In Some Places RDA Says to ‘Record’ an Element. Does That Mean the Same Thing?

No! ‘Transcribe’ is more specific than ‘record’; it tells you *how* to record the data. For example, the instruction for Publication Statements (2.8.1.4) says to ‘transcribe’ places of publication and publishers’ names, but to ‘record’ dates. So, depending on how the date is presented (in numerals or in words), you may not necessarily transcribe it exactly as it appears.

Examples:

Statement of responsibility on source:	edited by Jane Donovan (University of Virginiaa)
Transcribed:	edited by Jane Donovan (University of Virginiaa) [misspellings transcribed]

but

Copyright date on source:	copyright 2001
Recorded:	©2001 [copyright date not a transcribed element]

¹ For more guidance, see the document, “Capitalization, Abbreviations, Numbers”, available on the RDA Refresher page at <http://staff.loc.gov/sites/lstraining/special-training/rda-refreshers/>

This Document Covers the Transcription of *Core* Elements? Are These Listed Anywhere?

Yes. RDA 0.6 and its sub-instructions identify the core elements related to Manifestations (our focus here), Items, Works, Expressions, Group 2 Entities, and Relationships.

But be careful! – Not all core elements are *transcribed*; some are *recorded*. Since you have to read the instruction in any case, it is wisest to simply note, when you consult the Toolkit:

- Whether an element is considered “Core”
 - Whether the relevant instruction you *ultimately* end up at uses the word ‘transcribe’ (you often start in one instruction and are then referred through a sequence of instructions)
- Perhaps the best resource is ‘R-document’ R-1, “LC RDA Core Elements,” available at: http://www.loc.gov/aba/rda/pdf/core_elements.pdf. If an element is listed here, it is *by definition* core; and the “(T)” in the first column indicates that it is a transcribed element.

Can You Discuss a Few Key Elements Where Transcription is an Issue?

- For titles covered in chapter 2 (see 2.3.1.1) generally type what you see, with exceptions for capitalization, script, special characters, symbols, added punctuation, etc.² As stated earlier, this is true even to the point of transcribing typographical errors from the source.
- Titles proper in series *statements* are also to be transcribed. But note that the series *access point* is not a transcribed area.
- The statement of responsibility instruction (RDA 2.4.1.4) uses the word “transcribe.” Yes, there are options which allow you to use your judgment to omit names from a lengthy list of authors and/or to leave out degrees, titles, and affiliations if they are lengthy. But remember that the Policy Statements for both 2.4.1.4 and 2.4.1.5 say to ‘generally’ not do so. A good rule of thumb is to type exactly what appears on the source.
- Regarding the edition statement, there is a major change from AACR2: transcribe the *content* as it appears on the source (i.e., the words, letters, abbreviations, or numbers), although you may need to adjust capitalization, superscript numbers, symbols, etc. RDA uses that key word, “transcribe.” AACR2 did, too; but it also told you to use Appendixes B and C to record abbreviations and numerals – so you often did NOT transcribe exactly what appeared on the resource. Under RDA, if the edition statement appears with abbreviations, numerals, spelled-out words ... etc. -- transcribe the data as it appears on the source. In other words: **you** should not **change** spelled-out words or ordinal numbers or **substitute** standard abbreviations. So, if it reads “2nd ed.,” transcribe “2nd ed.”
- Regarding the publication statement, RDA 2.8.1.4 states, “Transcribe places of publication and publishers’ names as they appear on the source of information”. This means that, if the preferred source reads “New York, N.Y., USA”, you must transcribe it fully (even if you think it unnecessary). If the publisher’s name appears on the title page as “H.W. Wilson and Company”, transcribe it fully. But remember that the *date* of publication is a recorded element, not a transcribed element.

² When cataloging serials, a typographical error in the title proper of a serial should not be presumed to appear on all issues, and thus should not be transcribed as it appears; instead, record a ‘corrected’ title in the 245, and record the ‘as it appears’ title (with the typo) in a 246 field.