RDA Refresher Performance Support: Capitalization, Abbreviations, Numbers

This document highlights the major instructions and Policy Statements.

Capitalization (1.7.2)

“Apply the instructions on capitalization in appendix A”.

Appendix A provides guidelines for various languages, and instructions for types of words (titles, personal names, place names, religious names and terms, scientific names, trade names, etc.).

Examples showing capitalization according to Appendix A:

- A dictionary of American English on historical principles
- Sechs Partiten für Flöte (per A.41 instructions for German)
- eBay bargain shopping for dummies (per A.4.1 guideline for unusual capitalization)

LC and PCC have established their own guidelines (as allowed by an alternative to 1.7.1):

“For capitalization of transcribed elements, catalogers are encouraged (but not required) to follow App. A. It is permitted to ‘take what you see’ on the resource.”

You may transcribe a title or statement of responsibility in “ALLCAPS” if that is how it appears on the source. But do not take a ‘hybrid’ approach, capitalizing some elements according to App. A and others as on the source. If you do not ‘take what you see,’ you must follow Appendix A.

Abbreviations (1.7.8)

“Apply the instructions on the use of abbreviations in transcribed elements in appendix B.”

This instruction immediately leads you to Appendix B.4, which states: “For transcribed elements, use only those abbreviations found in the sources of information for the element.”

- B.2 and B.3 address the use of abbreviations in names of persons, families, corporate bodies, places, and titles of works (i.e., in access points)
- B.5 – B.11 list the abbreviations that are allowed in non-transcribed elements: “generally, do not abbreviate words in elements except those covered at B.5.1 and B.5.3–B.5.9”

Note: The “cm” used to record the dimensions (i.e., 300 $c$) is a symbol, not an abbreviation. Therefore, a following period is not appropriate. The symbol IS followed by a period only when the record includes a series statement; the rationale is that the period is ISBD punctuation that separates the areas, not punctuation that denotes an abbreviation.

Examples of abbreviations explicitly permitted by B.5 guidelines for non-transcribed areas:

- in. (per B.7 and B.5.1, for dimensions)
- min. (per B.7 and B.5.3, for duration)
Numbers (1.8)

“When recording numbers expressed as numerals or as words in a transcribed element, transcribe them in the form in which they appear on the source of information. Apply the general guidelines on transcription (see 1.7) as applicable.” (1.8.1)

Note: The guidelines at 1.8.2–1.8.5 apply only to the elements listed in 1.8.1 (date of publication, numbering within series, etc.). These do not include the title proper, statement of responsibility, or edition statement, in which numbers must be transcribed as on the source.

Examples:

55 places to discover your favourite tea (title proper transcribed as on source)
Second edition (edition statement transcribed as on source)

Numerals (1.8.2)

“Record numerals in the form preferred by the agency creating the data, unless the substitution would make the numbering less clear.” However, LC Practice is to apply the first alternative: “Record numerals in the form in which they appear on the source of information”

Example:

MMII (publication date transcribed as on source; do not convert to 2002; note that the third example at 2.8.6.3 does not reflect LC practice)

Numbers Expressed as Words (1.8.3)

“Substitute numerals for numbers expressed as words” (but only in the elements listed in 1.8.1).

Examples:

volume 1 (series numbering appears as “volume one”)
but
Fifty key literary theorists (transcribe title proper; do not substitute a numeral)

Inclusive Numbers (1.8.4)

When recording inclusive dates and numbers, record both the first and last number in full.

Ordinal Numbers (1.8.5)

When recording ordinal numbers in areas other than those listed in 1.8.1, record them as numerals and indicate that they are ordinal numbers following standard usage for the language.

Test Yourself! If you want more practice, try the online quiz, “RDA Refresher: Capitalization, Abbreviations, and Numbers,” available from COIN’s “RDA Refreshers” website, http://www.loc.gov/staff/lstraining/trgmat/rda-refresh/