National Diet Library Newsletter

No.192, December 2013

The NDL's action for the new Nippon Cataloging Rules (NCR)

1 Overview

The purpose of this article is to report that the National Diet Library (NDL) has decided to develop a new version of "Nippon (Japan) Cataloging Rules (NCR)" in collaboration with the Cataloging Committee of the Japan Library Association (JLA).

In February 2013, the Acquisitions and Bibliography Department of the NDL formulated "New Developments for Creating and Providing NDL's Bibliographic Data 2013" (New Development 2013) which gave direction for the next five years. In the third clause of the paper, it says "the NDL will establish bibliographic data standards which conform to characteristic features of materials and digital information." We decided to set standards mainly based on "Resource Description and Access (RDA)," keeping in mind international standards like the "Statement of International Cataloguing Principles" and also the future direction of the domestic trend in revising the NCR.

During consideration for detailed preparation of the third clause of New Development 2013, the NDL made a decision to establish and apply new rules that comply with the RDA, and not to directly translate it into Japanese, after carefully examining the characteristics of the Japanese language, the traditional practices of cataloging, and circumstances of publication in Japan.

Additionally, the NDL is trying to promote the new NCR throughout Japan building consensus with related organizations in Japan, in collaboration with the Cataloging Committee of the JLA.

The new NCR is scheduled to be published in FY2017.

2 Necessity of prompt actions toward the RDA and current issues

2.1 Necessity of prompt actions toward the RDA

The RDA is based on "Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records (FRBR)" and "Functional Requirements for Authority Data (FRAD)," the new concept model of bibliographic data, and it enables creating data to contribute to user's convenience. Based on the FRBR concept model, the RDA is just along the same line as "Statement of International Cataloguing Principles" which put the highest importance on user's convenience. Complying with the RDA will bring the following four merits.

i) International de facto standard

The RDA was issued in 2010 and some national libraries in the world have already decided to adopt it, and some are considering doing so. The Library of Congress has started applying the RDA since spring 2013.

ii) Adoptable rules for multi-material collection

The RDA can be commonly adopted for many kinds of materials including digital information.

iii) Taking account of authority information

Based on the FRBR and the FRAD, the RDA regards it as a premise that the "relationship of" data is structured by setting independent "entities" like works, persons, and concepts. As a result of the RDA adoption, the significance of authority information is considered to be higher than ever.

iv) Possibility of collaboration with non-library organizations

The RDA will open the door to possible collaboration with non-library organizations, as it does not require specific format systems and takes action toward the semantic web into consideration.

2.2 Current issues

To make it commonly adoptable in Japan, usability must be taken into maximum consideration in the new NCR. From this point of view, adoption of RDA has the following two issues.

i) Continuity between the old and the new

From the NCR users' perspective, the RDA looks quite different at first glance from conventional rules in its fundamental concept model, structures, and many new terms. Additionally, the cataloging operation is expected to be widely changed from the former one. Ignoring continuity between the old and the new can result in useless rules that burden the cataloger.

ii) Actions regarding "yomi" (different ways of reading Kanji characters)

The RDA does not have any rules relating to "yomi," which is one of the characteristics of the Japanese language. Actions regarding "yomi" have to be fully considered.