

RDA: TEX-MEX ASPECTS by Peter Kearney

Narrator: At the Library of Congress, the saga of RDA continues. After their extended training, catalogers keep striving to put it into practice, like pioneers in unfamiliar territory.

Chorus: (to the tune of “Cat’s in the Cradle”)

A change was made just the other day.

AACR is now RDA.

Now other countries can have their say

Far beyond England and the USA,

And cataloging rules from now on will be meant

For any new media the nerds invent.

Yeah, media the nerds invent.

Refrain:

April First was our start of toolin’

With the RDA Toolkit and that’s no foolin’.

How’s it gonna work, we can’t say now,

But we’ll make it work somehow, yeah.

You know, we’ll make it work somehow.

Cataloger 1: These new rules are so different from all that we used to do. It seems as though our whole world has come to an end.

Cataloger 2: The end of the world? It sounds as if you’ve been paying too much attention to the predictions of the Mayan calendar.

Cataloger 1: The Mayan calendar... that gives me an idea. The Mayans were an amazing people, highly skilled in astronomy and mathematics. Scholars think they must have had thousands of volumes in their libraries. Let’s learn from history and study how they managed their libraries.

Cataloger 2: How can we go about doing that?

Cataloger 1: By a happy coincidence, we have to take furloughs, so why don't we use them to go to the National Library in Paris. That's where we can examine the Paris Codex containing Mayan records.

Cataloger 2: How can we do that? The text is in hieroglyphics and much of it is still a mystery.

Cataloger 1: But some of it has been deciphered. And we'll have Joan Biella come with us. She's used to strange scripts and will probably figure out more of the text. Besides, LOC will undoubtedly help us with funding since our travel will improve cooperation between national libraries. What's more, our visit will promote RDA as a global system. Anyway, we'll be in Paris, so we'll have a great time.

Narrator: Believe it or not, LOC came through and funded Joan for a trip to study Mayan librarianship. She and several colleagues set out for France to begin their study of the famous Paris Codex in the Bibliotheque Nationale. To get more in the spirit of the Mayan texts, Joan brought along her authentic Mayan style headdress that she got while on a previous trip to Mexico.

Joan: This is amazing! Somehow I'm able to get the drift of the hieroglyphics. The text explains how the Mayans captured slaves and forced them to be librarians. In an attempt to escape from their libraries, some became astronomers and predictors of the future. These sages could see that their world was ending and that someday they would be replaced by the Aztec Empire. They then persuaded the full-time librarians to record their cataloging rules for the future. This is astounding! They called that future system "RDA," Resource Description and Aztecs. The text goes on to explain that some of the slave librarians became professional ball players.

Colleague 1: Oh, yes. I heard about their ritual ball games. The winners actually lost their lives because they were offered up in sacrifice. You would think that at least some of them would be happier to lose the game.

Chorus: (to the tune of "Take Me Out to the Ball Game")

Take me out of the ball game.

Don't let me win and then die.

Save my neck from the deadly axe.

Send me back to the library stacks.

I will draw composite descriptions

And numbers that identify,

So I won't be the one to hit a home run

That becomes a sacrifice fly.

Colleague 2: Great work, Joan. I'd love to have a try at deciphering the code as well, building on the signs that you figured out. Hmm, I see the Mayan sages had another striking picture of the future: I think the text says that one day a leader named Sam Houston will defeat the Mexicans and as a result their ball team, the Mayan Astros, will become the Houston Astros. Keeping up the spirit of the Mayan team, they will set a record for the most losses in one season.

Just think! We never would have known all that unless the Mayan librarians had noted both the preferred and variant names for the corporate body as access points and identifying attributes.

Colleague 1: It's surprising how our own RDA was anticipated by the Mayans centuries ago. Is there anything in the text about the creator of a work?

Joan: Well, yes. They say something very close to our own RDA.

Chorus: (to the tune of "I Love Paris")

Paris, you have helped us big time,

Learn rules while we have a ball:

Write creators as you find them in resources.

No corrections; never mind them. Hold your horses.

This way we'll use any records from nearby or from afar.

Though a creator be north or south of the equator,

We'll take them as they are.

Narrator: Joan and her colleagues continued examining the work and Joan even used her artistic skill to draw a copy of the hieroglyphs for further study. RDA didn't seem quite so impossible as before.

Chorus: (to the tune of "Cat's in the Cradle")

The Mayans and Aztecs are come and gone

But their system for cataloging still lives on.

We don't understand all the words they drew
But we can take what's there though we don't have a clue.
Some future day they may decode the hieroglyphs
And make them elements of Cores or of Core ifs.
Yeah, elements of Core or Core ifs.

Refrain:

We're using RDA and the rules for FRBR,
Lost in a desert like a wandering Berber.
How's it gonna work, we can't say now,
But we'll make it work somehow, yeah.
You know we'll make it work somehow.

Added stanza:

Getting some background from another day,
A team went to study M-A-Y-A.
Their calendar showed there would come a day
When the world would end or it would seem that way.
So they shut down all their libraries and walked away
And said, "Let's leave it to the Aztecs. Give them RDA.
Yeah, let them have our RDA."

Refrain:

We're using RDA and the rules for FRBR,
Lost in a desert like a wandering Berber.
How's it gonna work, we can't say now,

But we'll make it work somehow, yeah.

You know we'll make it work somehow.

Colleague 1: I think we got a great start. We couldn't have done it without you, Joan.

Colleague 2: Thanks so much for all the work you did with us and for us. Lots of luck and happiness to you in your retirement.

CURTAIN