

Readiness of Ghanaian University Libraries Towards the Adoption and Implementation of Resource Description and Access

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Abstract

This research paper, which is part of a broader study, seeks to contribute to knowledge on the Resource Description and Access standard by exploring the state of readiness of Ghanaian university libraries to implement the standard, as well as highlighting the myriad of activities and initiatives that libraries should undertake in preparation for RDA implementation. This convergent parallel mixed methods study engaged 62 cataloguing practitioners, across nine university libraries, through questionnaires and interviews as data collection instruments. The analysis of data revealed the importance of planning and an overwhelming state of unpreparedness among Ghanaian university libraries to implement the standard. The study also contributes various appropriate activities and initiatives for readying libraries for RDA implementation to RDA literature. It is recommended among others, that university

library management and leaders of professional library organisations designate RDA preparatory periods and forge collaborations and partnerships with libraries that have implemented the RDA standard.

Keywords: Resource Description and Access; Readiness; Implementation; University libraries; Ghana

Introduction

Resource Description and Access (RDA) as a cataloguing standard, is increasingly attaining acceptance and universality as the bibliographic standard of the current dispensation since its full implementation in 2013. Evidence of this acceptance is marked by the growing number of subscriptions to the standard and the upsurge in RDA records in the Online Public Access Catalogues of libraries and bibliographic utilities (Hennelly 2016). The influence and usage of the Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules 2nd Edition (AACR2) is fast diminishing, as more library systems transition to RDA for bibliographic description.

The transition to RDA, from AACR2 is characterised by deliberate and meticulous planning with vast financial, logistical, managerial and institutional implications. Cronin (2014) extols the principles of feasibility, merit and culture in the transition to RDA at the University of Chicago, and identified systems support, staffing levels, minimal disruption to users and change management as issues considered at the forefront of the transition process. Lee (2014), chronicling the adoption and implementation of the RDA standard in the United Kingdom's Courtauld Institute of Art, draws attention to the considerable period spent by the institution on

pre-planning the RDA transition and readying themselves towards RDA implementation.

Libraries, in readying themselves to adopt RDA, connotes the realisation of the need for the standard, and the benefits that accrues to it, if it is adopted and implemented, as well as the awareness of the potential pitfalls of relying on an outdated standard. Indicators of readiness to adopt the RDA standard in libraries include the following: collection of RDA training materials; the search for potential RDA experts; the commencement of translation of the RDA Toolkit into other languages which are not available currently; verifying the compatibility of the current integrated library system to the RDA standard; and the setting up of governance bodies (Luo, Zhao, and Qi 2014; Hennelly 2016). These indicators are undertaken in a preparatory period, which is a period meant for learning, undertaking feasibilities and all the leg works required for a successful implementation. The readiness of libraries to adopt RDA is facilitated by the availability of funding and technical expertise and inhibited by the inadequacy or absence of these same resources (Van Rensburg 2017; Turner, 2014).

Adoption of RDA follows the expiration of the preparatory period which is used for pre-planning, planning and readying the library for RDA (Lee 2014). Adoption connotes the decision of the library to endorse RDA as its cataloguing standard and is indicated by the commitment of resources by the library towards the use of the standard for its bibliographic description. The acquisition of training materials, organisation of training programmes, readying and making the prevailing Integrated Library Systems (ILS) RDA compliant, and the determination of a definite date for migration, signify the adoption of RDA and heralds its implementation in the foreseeable future (Lee 2014). Adoption of RDA in libraries can be facilitated by availability of funding and technical expertise and the support of the management of libraries, and can, similarly, be hampered by their lack or inadequacy (Van Rensburg 2017; Morris and Wiggins 2016).

Adoption of RDA and the myriad of activities under its purview is a harbinger to the implementation of the RDA standard. Implementation of RDA connotes the changing over from AACR2 to RDA on a definite date. Implementation of RDA is indicated by a change in

the library's MARC records from AACR2 to RDA in the library's OPAC. The active conversion of existing MARC records from AACR2 to RDA (conversion of legacy data), is also regarded as another indication of RDA implementation in a library (Morris and Wiggins 2016). The backing of library management and the availability of RDA experts and system librarians to manage RDA integration into existing ILS are factors that will facilitate implementation of RDA in libraries, while their unavailability inhibits the RDA implementation effort (Van Rensburg 2017; Morris and Wiggins 2016).

Statement of the Problem

Since 2014, cataloguing records, particularly those originating from advanced jurisdictions, are being created based on the RDA standard. Consequently, the MARC records in the Library of Congress catalogue and those of other bibliographic utilities, such as Online Computer Library Centre (OCLC), are being created in RDA or being converted from AACR2 to RDA (Morris and Wiggins 2016). Simultaneously, libraries in Ghana are importing these RDA records into their AACR2 compliant Integrated Library Systems and catalogues through their predominant copy cataloguing practice (Yeboah 2021). It is instructive to note that the similarity in the foundation and structure of RDA and AACR2 is what has enabled the concurrent co-habitation of both RDA and AACR2 records in a single ILS (Oliver 2010). This respite is momentary however, and is not expected to be a long-term alternative, especially as emerging and existing ILS become fully RDA compliant. This implies that the practice, by most Ghanaian university libraries, of continually importing RDA-based records into the AACR2 compliant ILS is untenable and unsustainable in the long run.

RDA has been deemed to be beneficial in terms of providing better guidance to the description of information resources in all formats and enhancing their visibility and discoverability by users. This, coupled with the fact that the standard has clearly come to stay implies that Ghanaian university libraries, at the very least, ought to be readying themselves towards RDA implementation. The RDA standard cannot be said to enjoy widespread use on the African continent, it is only South Africa that is leading the way in terms of extent of implementation.

Though local studies on RDA (Monyela, 2020; Ifijeh, Segun-Adeniran, and Igbisola, 2019; Van Rensburg, 2017; Oguntayo and Adeleke, 2016) abound, these studies do not discuss the standard from the readiness and standpoint and side-steps the cataloguing of activities undertaken in readying libraries for implementing the RDA standard.

After close to a decade of little activity, in terms of RDA implementation, at Ghanaian university libraries, save for the University of Education, Winneba libraries, the stage of non-implementation, where the vast majority of libraries are currently at ought to necessarily be truncated to usher in the preparatory stage for RDA implementation. For this to materialise, local Ghanaian literature on the subject, such as this current study, are required to offer guidance and serve as reference cases for prospective implementers of the standard in Ghana. The transition to the preparatory stage will likely engender a more impactful conversation and change the narrative towards the full implementation of the standard in Ghanaian university libraries. To this end, the paper aimed to determine the extent of readiness of Ghanaian university libraries to adopt and implement RDA.

Objectives of the Study

The study sought to:

1. find out the importance of planning and preparation in RDA adoption and implementation.
2. determine the range of activities undertaken by libraries in readying themselves for RDA adoption and implementation.
3. establish the appropriateness of these activities undertaken to ready libraries for RDA implementation.
4. establish the extent of readiness of Ghanaian university libraries to adopt and implement RDA as a cataloguing standard.

Literature Review

The readiness stage connotes a stage where libraries, having made a decision to adopt RDA, undertake a series of activities to set themselves up in anticipation of a full implementation of the standard. These activities, which usually are the planning and

preparatory works, are geared towards ensuring a smooth implementation. To put the need for planning in context, Kalwara, Dale and Coleman (2017) draw readers' attention to the two years the Library of Congress spent in transitioning to full implementation. Cakmak (2018:32) in his account of RDA implementation in Turkey observed that the preparatory and planning stages related to implementing the RDA standard involved improving the prevailing computer infrastructure, organising staff capacity building programmes, creating RDA awareness among library professionals, and developing policies to guide the transition process.

Building the capacities of librarians in RDA places a drain on the already perilous financial positions of libraries (Ifijeh, Segun-Adeniran, and Igbisola, 2019:123). The subscription of the RDA Toolkit and the acquisition of training materials presents another financial investment decision for managers of libraries. The subscription which is quoted in United States dollars present most management teams with important investment decisions owing to the weak financial positions of libraries and exacerbated by the deteriorating exchange rates against major foreign currencies. The adoption of ICT in most university libraries in Ghana is evidenced by the usage of ILS and this represents an earlier investment that has proven handy in the current circumstances. The cataloguing modules and the MARC 21 framework that accompanies them, are easily made compatible with the RDA standard and as such, will save these libraries some financial investment. Ahonsi (2014) also identifies computer infrastructure and Internet connectivity as a logistical investment that ought to be made before RDA can be adopted and implemented. The impediment of limited financial resources in libraries is widespread and has led libraries to consider innovative solutions, such as consortium building, to tackle this challenge. Oehlschlager (2012) reveals an instance in Britain, where a collaboration between the British Library and the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) led to the two working together to train cataloguers on RDA.

Oliver (2010) identifies training and capacity as key components in the transition from AACR2 to RDA. Much as AACR2 and RDA have fundamental similarities, these commonalities are not all encompassing, given the models that anchor RDA

and the distinct set of vocabulary and concepts they introduce into the cataloguing practice. The changes in the approach to dealing with contents and carriers, and MARC 21, occasioned by the RDA standard, represent genuine aspects of the new standard that require extensive training and capacity building among cataloguers. Ifijeh, Segun-Adeniran and Igbinola (2019) came to the same conclusion that cataloguers and librarians need training on both the theoretical knowledge and hands-on application of the RDA rules but contends that the training options open to librarians in Nigeria seems to be in-country workshops, seminars and conferences where specialists are requested to provide instructions and train cataloguers on the subject. The authors, however, catalogue a host of challenges militating against these RDA training programmes. They identify the fee-based nature of these programmes, lack of finance to sponsor librarians to attend these capacity building programmes, inadequate facilities and computer infrastructure and ultimately the challenge of getting qualified local RDA experts to train librarians as factors inhibiting capacity building in RDA in Nigeria.

The literature is pervasive with assertions regarding the training of cataloguers on RDA before implementation was rolled out in many libraries (Ducheva and Pennington 2017; Jin and Sandberg, 2014). Cakmak (2018) predicates that successful RDA implementation in libraries is mostly contingent on a deliberate set of planning and decision-making phases that would encompass improving required infrastructure and capacity building. John-Okeke (2019), in aligning with this point of view, opine that building capacities and training cataloguing librarians in emerging standards are best undertaken by national bibliographic authorities like national libraries. Cakmak (2018) notes the effort of the Turkey National Library, who spearheaded the RDA initiative by bringing together scholars, cataloguing librarians and decision makers to a common platform to facilitate discussions on terminological studies, development of national authority files, infrastructure developments, training and instruction exercises, and awareness creation events. In South Africa's case, the National Library's Bibliographic Services Programme was mandated to constitute a committee, tasked to educate the cataloguing community of South Africa on the new RDA standard after the

initial publication of the draft RDA 2008 (Monyela 2020, Ahonsi 2014).

The enrolment of librarians in library schools, and their monitoring of the trends in contemporary research in the field, attending webinars, conferences, workshops and library association programmes, have also been touted as avenues for training and capacity building of librarians in RDA (Oguntayo and Adeleke 2016; Sanner 2012). The provision of education on the RDA standard represents a prime area, where library schools can direct their focus, to assist libraries in Ghana and the entire continent, to adopt and implement the RDA standard. The continued maintenance of AACR2 in the curricula of library schools on the African continent is a contributing factor to the persistent reliance on the AACR2 standard by libraries (Oguntayo and Adeleke, 2016).

Research Methodology

This study adopted a mixed methods approach by deploying surveys and case studies as research designs for a better chance of exploring the issues from both staff and management perspectives. In a census mode, the study surveyed 45 cataloguing staff at the operational level and 17 cataloguing staff at the policy and management level in the study's quantitative and qualitative phases respectively. At the operational level are staff involved in the daily cataloguing activity and mandated with bibliographic entry while at the policy level are the managers and decision makers of the cataloguing units and departments. The respondents and participants of the study were drawn from 9 public university libraries, namely University of Ghana (UG-13); Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST-12); University of Cape Coast (UCC-18); University of Professional Studies (UPS-4); University of Education, Winneba (UEW-10); University of Development Studies (UDS-8); University of Mines and Technology (UMaT-4); University of Health and Allied Sciences (UHAS-8) and University of Energy and Natural Resources (UENR-3).

Closed and open-ended questionnaire was provided to the 45 cataloguing staff at the operational level, while the 17 cataloguing staff at the policy level underwent an interview session guided by an

interview guide. The quantitative data for study was gathered between April and May 2023 via electronic and print mediums, while the interview sessions were a mixture of face to face and telephone interviews. Both data sets were then cleaned to eliminate glaring errors and inconsistencies before they were analysed. The quantitative data were analysed with SPSS, while the qualitative data were analysed through a thematic content analysis. The analysed results from the quantitative and qualitative phases were then presented descriptively and narratively in a mixed manner representative of the study's adopted convergent parallel mixed methods design.

Results

The researcher in this section sought, through a variety of questioning, to determine how ready the Ghanaian university libraries were, to adopting and implementing RDA and how they were likely to plan and prepare for any future implementation if any.

Demographics

The demographics offers an insight into the profile of the cataloguing practitioners, whose responses and opinions form the crux of the study and helps place the study in proper context.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of Respondents

Cataloguing staff at operational level (N=45)		
Gender	N	%
Male	19	42.2
Female	26	57.8
Age		
21-40	6	13.3
31-40	26	57.8
41-50	12	26.7
51-60	1	2.2
Level of education		
Doctorate degree	2	4.4
Master's degree	22	49.0
Bachelor's degree	19	42.2
HND/Diploma	2	4.4
Years of working experience in cataloguing unit, section or department		
0-2 years	16	35.6
3-5 years	15	33.3
6-10 years	9	20.0
11-15 years	3	6.7
16 years and above	2	4.4

From the quantitative perspective, Table 1, above, shows a relatively youthful workforce in the cataloguing department of Ghana's public academic libraries. The youthful workforce notwithstanding, the level of education appears quite high with postgraduate and bachelor's degree emerging as the highest level of education among these cataloguing practitioners. The cataloguing staff were deemed however to be relatively inexperienced with only 31.1% of them having in excess of six years' experience.

From the qualitative phase of the study, seventeen (17) participants tagged from cataloguer (CAT) 1 to CAT 17, in various capacities, such as university librarians (UL), head cataloguers (HC) and deputy head cataloguers (DHC), participated in the interview sessions. The females constituted the majority (9) of these participants with the remaining 8 being males. Again, the majority of the participants were found to be in the 36 to 40 years age bracket,

and most of these participants have a master's degree as their current level of education.

Importance of Preparing and Planning to Adopt Implement RDA

The quite considerable nature of the RDA implementation initiative makes the planning for such a project imperative. As a result, the respondents were asked to rate how important the preparation and planning for the adoption and implementation of RDA is, through the use of a five-point Likert scale, ranging from extremely important (5); very important (4); important (3); slightly important (2) to not important (1). The findings revealed that, for the majority of respondents, planning is rated as extremely important in the adoption and implementation ($x=4.44$), subscription of RDA ($x=4.38$), usage of RDA ($x=4.36$) and evaluation of RDA ($x=4.24$). The data is presented in table 2.

Table 2: Importance of preparing and planning in different stages of RDA implementation

RDA implementation stages	Ratings					Weighted mean
	5	4	3	2	1	
Adoption and implementation	31(69%)	9(20%)	1(2%)	2(4%)	2(4%)	4.44
Subscription of RDA	26(58%)	14(31%)	2(4%)	2(4%)	1(2%)	4.38
Using RDA	27(60%)	12(27%)	2(4%)	3(7%)	1(2%)	4.36
Evaluation of RDA	24(53%)	12(27%)	6(13%)	2(4%)	1(2%)	4.24

In their view, the planning and preparation for RDA implementation is significant. These participants, speaking from a management and policy standpoint, revealed that planning permits libraries which intend to implement RDA in the future to budget for the resource implications and court the support and buy-in of the necessary stakeholders. In this regard, some of the participants opined as follows:

CAT 10 (Head Cataloguer): *"Preparing and readying our library for RDA was important. We needed to put things in place in order to have a*

coordinated implementation. The decision to go for RDA was not a straightforward one because there were a few dissenting voices. We had to prepare for a period of time, learn a bit, provide education and convince important stakeholders like the library committee and university management".

CAT 16 (University Librarian): *"I believe in a library preparing and readying itself for adopting or implementing any innovation, not just RDA.*

You need to prepare in terms of the manpower, the people who are going to use the standard, to do the description. Is there any need for training? Is any software or technology required for this standard? Do your current systems support the standard you intend to implement? Is an upgrade of the current system needed? What are the financial implications? These, are some of the teething questions I believe one can ask in the course of readying oneself before adopting or implementing an innovation like RDA”.

While the importance of planning and preparation for future RDA implementation was universally endorsed by many participants, the benefits and challenges of the preparatory period was a theme that also emerged from the discussions. Participants (CAT 3, 7, 8 and 11) were of the opinion that preparatory periods engender cost savings, risk reduction and learning opportunities. In this regard, the following remarks were made:

When participants were probed on the challenges of the preparatory stage, they had this to say:

CAT 5 (Deputy Head Cataloguer): *“Yes, there are challenges to the preparatory stage. I know, because I faced something similar when advocating for the collaboration with RDA implementing libraries. The mere allocation of scarce resources to initiatives, which are yet to materialise, was not attractive to some management members”.*

CAT 9 (University Librarian): *“The major challenge of this preparatory period, I have to say, was understanding the application of the standard to an extent where one can train others, especially in the absence of comprehensive guidance and collaborations”.*

Activities Undertaken by Libraries in the Preparation for RDA Adoption and Implementation

Through the findings of the study, it was established that 8 (UG, KNUST, UCC, UPSA, UDS, UMaT,

UHAS, UENR) out of the 9 Ghanaian university libraries in this study have not implemented RDA as a cataloguing standard. Based on this, the researcher sought to ascertain from respondents, their views on their library’s readiness or preparedness to adopt and implement RDA. Using a five-point Likert scale, the respondents were asked to rate the extent to which the RDA preparatory activities for adoption and implementation were undertaken, starting with “to a great extent” (4); “somewhat” (3); “very little” (2); “not at all” (1) to “not applicable” (N/A). The findings of the study, as shown in Table 3, revealed that the majority of the respondents, 38 (84%), indicated “non-applicable (N/A)” for all RDA preparatory activities, since their respective libraries have yet to implement RDA. The reasons for the non-implementation included the expensive nature of RDA, lack of RDA expertise and the perceived lack of significant differences between AACR2 and RDA.

It is noteworthy, however, that seven respondents (16%) rated the preparatory activities in terms of the extent to which they were undertaken in preparing towards RDA implementation. These respondents are clearly from the University of Education-Winneba (UEW), which is the sole implementing library among the 9 sites.

Table 3 reveals budgeting for the RDA project (x=4.0) and verification of the RDA compatibility of the current ILS (x=4.0) as the preparatory activities undertaken “to a great extent” at UEW. Also undertaken “to a great extent” at the UEW library were RDA preparatory activities such as staff training and capacity building (x=3.57), acquiring computer infrastructure and software (x=3.14), ensuring stable power supply (x=3.14) and subscribing to stable Internet connectivity (x=3.14). The UEW respondents, in all their entirety, identified the translation of the RDA (x=1.0) as a preparatory activity that was never undertaken, mainly because RDA is published in English. Table 3 deliberately lumps the data from both implementing and non-implementing libraries to provide a holistic picture of the views of respondents from both implementing and non-implementing libraries regarding the activities undertaken in preparing for RDA implementation in one frame. The full data is presented in table 3.

Table 3: RDA preparatory activities undertaken and their extent of engagement (N=45)

RDA preparatory activities	Ratings					Weighted mean
	4	3	2	1	N/A	
Budgeting (finance) for the RDA project	7(16%)	-	-	-	38(84%)	4.00
Acquiring computer infrastructure and related software	5(11%)	-	-	2(4%)	38(84%)	3.14
Ensuring stable power	5(11%)	-	-	2(4%)	38(84%)	3.14
Subscribing to stable internet connectivity	5(11%)	-	-	2(4%)	38(84%)	3.14
Acquisition of RDA training materials	4(9%)	-	-	3(7%)	38(84%)	2.71
Staff training and capacity building in RDA	5(11%)	1(2%)	1(2%)	-	38(84%)	3.57
Sponsoring selected staff to attend train-the-trainer RDA programs	2(4%)	2(4%)	3(7%)	-	38(84%)	2.86
Search for potential RDA experts	1(2%)	3(7%)	1(2%)	2(4%)	38(84%)	2.43
Verification of the compatibility of the current Integrated Library Systems to the RDA standard	7(16%)	-	-	-	38(84%)	4.00
Establishment of RDA governance bodies, committees and task forces	-	1(2%)	3(7%)	3(7%)	38(84%)	1.71
Commencement of translation of the RDA Toolkit into languages not available in RDA	-	-	-	7(16%)	38(84%)	1.00

The study in its qualitative phase sought to ascertain from participants, the range of activities libraries have undertaken or likely to undertake to prepare for RDA implementation. The majority of participants had little to say about the range of activities they have undertaken in preparation for RDA implementation, as these participants were from RDA non-implementing libraries. Participants from the sole RDA implementing library, by virtue of their status, addressed the question. One such participant averred that:

CAT 9 (University Librarian): *“We had a preparatory period of about six months from the time we had our first training to day one of RDA copy cataloguing and during this period, a lot of activities were undertaken towards preparing the grounds for a future take off. Some of the activities we undertook during this period included talking to library management about funding, getting a few more computers, acquiring RDA training materials from online sources mostly, ensuring internet connectivity was reliable, searching for RDA expertise and confirming that our ILMS, Virtua was RDA compliant”.*

Appropriateness of Preparatory Activities Undertaken to Prepare Libraries for RDA Implementation

Although RDA has not been implemented in the majority of the libraries, it was imperative to assess respondents' views regarding the appropriateness of the various RDA preparatory activities evident from RDA literature. Concurrently, it was necessary to assess, from the perspective of the respondents of

the library that has implemented RDA, the appropriateness of the preparatory activities that were undertaken, prior to RDA implementation. An assessment of the appropriateness or otherwise of RDA preparatory activities can be made by cataloguing staff with some level of experience. A five-point Likert scale was used in this regard to ascertain whether respondents found RDA preparatory activities as “absolutely appropriate” (5); “appropriate” (4); “neutral” (3); “inappropriate” (2); or “absolutely inappropriate” (1).

The findings of the study revealed that, although, the RDA preparatory activities were not applicable to most respondents (because their libraries had not implemented RDA), they were found to be appropriate on different levels in preparing towards the adoption and implementation of RDA as a cataloguing standard in university libraries in Ghana. Table 4 shows that staff training and capacity building was viewed as the most appropriate RDA preparatory activity with a mean (\bar{x})=4.53). Similarly budgeting (finance) for the RDA project emerged as the second most appropriate RDA preparatory activity, at \bar{x} =4.49. The respondents again identified the commencement of translation of the RDA Toolkit, into other languages that are not currently available, as the least appropriate RDA preparatory activity, with a mean of 3.02. In table 4, it is clearly shown that, on the average, over 75% of the respondents found the RDA preparatory activities to be appropriate in one form or another. It could then be deduced that these respondents agree that the preparatory activities for RDA are appropriate and should be adopted to prepare libraries for RDA implementation. Fuller details of the data can be found in table 4.

Table 4: Appropriateness of RDA preparatory activities in RDA adoption and implementation (N=45)

RDA preparatory activities	Ratings					Weighted mean
	5	4	3	2	1	
Budgeting (finance) for the RDA project	33(73%)	6(13%)	3(7%)	1(2%)	2(4%)	4.49
Acquiring computer infrastructure and related software	28(62%)	9(20%)	4(9%)	2(4%)	2(4%)	4.31
Ensuring stable power	30(67%)	8(18%)	2(4%)	3(7%)	2(4%)	4.36
Subscribing to stable internet connectivity	32(71%)	7(16%)	2(4%)	2(4%)	2(4%)	4.44
Acquisition of RDA training materials	28(62%)	10(22%)	4(9%)	1(2%)	2(4%)	4.36
Staff training and capacity building in RDA	35(78%)	4(9%)	3(7%)	1(2%)	2(4%)	4.53
Sponsoring selected staff to attend train-the-trainer RDA programs	20(44%)	18(40%)	3(7%)	2(4%)	2(4%)	4.16
Search for potential RDA experts	17(38%)	19(42%)	5(11%)	2(4%)	2(4%)	4.04
Verification of the compatibility of the current Integrated Library systems to the RDA standard	18(40%)	14(31%)	6(14%)	2(4%)	5(11%)	3.84
Establishment of RDA governance bodies, committees and task forces	10(2%)	14(31%)	14(31%)	4(9%)	3(7%)	3.53
Commencement of translation of the RDA Toolkit into languages not available in the RDA	11(24%)	8(18%)	7(16%)	9(20%)	10(22%)	3.02

When asked about the appropriateness of the preparatory activities that they undertook, one participant from the RDA implementing library made the following observation:

CAT 8 (Head Cataloguer): *“These preparatory activities provided vital information, brought the implementation into focus and contributed towards our implementation efforts. With the benefit of hindsight, I think these activities were absolutely appropriate in preparing towards RDA implementation”.*

Readiness of Ghanaian Public University Libraries to Adopt and Implement RDA

On the back of the foregoing discussion, participants were asked to give their views on their libraries’ state of readiness for the implementation of the RDA standard. The majority of participants, in their capacities as decision makers with regard to cataloguing in their libraries, were explicit and stated that their libraries were not ready to adopt and implement RDA. Other participants indicated their libraries were unprepared to implement RDA, due to the lack of funds for the project. In this regard, the participants commented as follows:

CAT 2 (Head Cataloguer): *“Presently, no resources are being committed to RDA and, so, I find it difficult opining that we are readying ourselves towards RDA in any way”.*

CAT 16 (University Librarian): *“At the moment, no arrangements are being made to adopt the standard at the management level, but at the department discussions in that regard have commenced”.*

CAT 17 (Head Cataloguer): *“As the head of Cataloguing, I can confirm that no proposal to adopt RDA has been proffered to my library management and that, currently, no arrangements are being made towards RDA adoption”.*

Discussion of Findings

The importance of prior planning and preparation for RDA implementation, as established in this study

reflects the position canvassed by Panchyshyn, Lambert and McCutcheon (2019) and Lee (2014). The evaluation of RDA, as a standard, is a theme that has not been explored explicitly in RDA literature, especially by libraries that have implemented RDA fully. The closest form of evaluation appears to be an attempt by scholars to juxtapose RDA records with those of AACR2 (Thuku 2016). Han, Wacker and Dartt (2011) take a different path with regard to the evaluation of RDA, by assessing the compatibility of the standard to other bibliographic frameworks such as Dublin Core and Metadata Object Description Schema (MODS). These expositions, be they explicit or implicit, are corroborated by the findings of this study, to the effect that a form of evaluation of the RDA standard is significant in the entire RDA implementation value chain.

The undertaking of preparative activities by libraries, in anticipation of RDA implementation, is a theme that readily seeps out of the RDA literature particularly from successful implementation cases (Ducheva and Pennington 2017; Lee 2014). It has been determined that the transition period to full implementation vary from library to library, with longer transition periods appearing to engender relatively higher rates of success in RDA implementation. The transition period for the UEW library was determined to be six months, which is eighteen months short of the time spent by the Library of Congress as a transition period (Kalwara, Dale and Coleman 2017). The disparity in the length of the two transition periods speaks to the mismatch in the success of RDA implementation in the two libraries.

The study identified sourcing for funding as an activity that had to be undertaken in the preparatory period by UEW. Libraries with better financial backing have been found to succeed in RDA implementation and have achieved full implementation earlier than libraries where there were limited or no financial backing. Funding, according to the participants from UEW library, was required for acquiring computers and other logistical infrastructure, to subscribe to the RDA Toolkit, for commissioning RDA experts to provide training on and organising preparations for RDA. Given the age-old budgetary concerns of libraries, globally, and African libraries, specifically, the practice of

proactively lobbying for budgetary support in anticipation of RDA implementation sounds rational as an RDA preparatory activity.

Another activity that was undertaken by the UEW library, in their preparation towards RDA implementation, was the verification of the compatibility of their existing ILMS, Virtua to RDA. The compatibility of the ILMS, currently in use in academic libraries, appear to propel RDA implementation considerably than is the case when such compatibility does not exist, and this was also alluded to by a participant from UEW. This finding reflects the position of scholars like John-Okeke (2019) and Lee (2014), who found in their studies, deliberate attempts to audit the existing ILMS for their compatibility to RDA. According to the participants, the majority of the libraries in this study have not implemented RDA, due to the incompatibility of the prevailing ILMS to RDA. This was identified as a major reason for non-implementation.

The study also revealed acquiring computer infrastructure and ensuring stable power supply and Internet connectivity, as activities that were undertaken by UEW in its preparatory period. RDA literature indicates that computer and other logistical infrastructure, such as stable power supply and internet connectivity, generally, do not present a challenge in advanced jurisdictions and as such are not flagged in the literature. On the contrary, studies conducted by Ifijeh, Segun-Adeniran and Igbisola (2019) and John-Okeke (2019), inquiring into the prospects of RDA implementation at academic libraries in Nigeria, found the acquisition of computer and logistical infrastructure as part of the preparatory activities underway at these libraries in light of a future RDA implementation and thus corroborated by this study.

Organising staff training and capacity building programmes on RDA was also part of the activities that UEW undertook in preparation for RDA implementation. The training offered to cataloguing staff of UEW during this period were largely introductory, with instructions being provided from among the senior cataloguers, who were mainly self-taught, from online sources. This situation mimics the findings of Oguntayo and Adeleke (2016), who found that, in Nigeria, organisation of introductory training programmes at academic libraries were occasionally undertaken.

At the other end of the continuum, it was established in the study, that some other activities were rarely undertaken in the course of preparing for RDA implementation. These activities include the search for potential RDA experts, establishment of RDA governance bodies, committees and taskforces and the translation of the RDA Toolkit from English into other languages.

The study revealed that in the course of preparing for RDA implementation at UEW, issues bordering on translation were never contemplated because RDA was published in English. Thus, unlike, the instance of implementation in Portuguese, Arabic and other language speaking countries (Silva, Ferreira, and Martins 2016; Pazooki, Zeinolabedini, and Arastoopoor 2014; Luo, Zhao, and Qi 2014) where implementation of the standard was preceded by translation activities, the opposite appears to have prevailed in Ghana as well as all the libraries in countries whose official languages included English.

Another preparative activity revealed by the study, but which have seldom been undertaken in the course of preparing for RDA implementation, was the establishment of RDA governance bodies, committees or taskforces. This is an activity that has been engaged to a great effect, in most successful implementation cases globally (Ducheva and Pennington 2017, Turner 2014). In Ghana's case, however, the preparatory stage of RDA implementation was not characterised by the establishment of any governance body, in the form of either a committee or taskforce. The reluctance of libraries in most African countries to explore the establishment of RDA working groups as an RDA preparatory activity is perhaps not surprising when one considers the apparent lack of expertise and knowledge in RDA, as established in this study and the broader RDA literature (Oguntayo and Adeleke 2016; Ahonsi 2014). After a decade of the standard, expertise on the standard appears not have improved significantly with implementation of the standard still low on the continent and instruction of RDA practically non-existent in the curriculum of Ghanaian library schools.

The study reveals that, to a great extent, Ghanaian public university libraries are not ready to adopt and implement the RDA standard. This was evidenced by the low awareness drive of RDA in these libraries, the basic knowledge of RDA among

cataloguing staff and supervisors alike, the absence of current and prospective investment and allocation of resources in preparation for a future RDA implementation, the lack of training opportunities in RDA, both within the university libraries and library fraternities, and the lack of RDA expertise in the Ghanaian academic library environment. This reflects the situation in many developing countries, as reported in various studies (Monyela 2020; Ifijeh, Segun-Adeniran and Igbisola 2019; John-Okeke 2019). These studies, conducted on the African continent, found most academic libraries to be unprepared for RDA implementation.

Conclusion

The study set out to establish the extent of readiness of Ghanaian academic libraries to adopt and implement RDA as their bibliographic standard. In establishing the non-preparedness of an overwhelming majority of these libraries, the importance of planning and preparing for the implementation of the standard was confirmed. The study also revealed an extensive range of RDA preparative activities that ought to be undertaken in the period prior to full adoption and implementation of the standard although the appropriateness of such activities was found to be different and influenced by culture, language and competencies.

The transition to RDA is inevitable for Ghanaian libraries, considering the significant reliance on bibliographic records created and maintained by international bibliographic utilities. The relative weak financial position of these libraries precludes an expeditious, timely and one-time migration to the RDA standard, as evidenced by the non-implementation of the standard almost a decade since its promulgation. This imperfect condition notwithstanding, Ghanaian university libraries ought to necessarily ready themselves towards RDA implementation in an attempt to approach the subject with a fair bit of proactiveness and preparedness.

Recommendations

For libraries to ready themselves for RDA implementation, it is suggested that:

- Library management of university libraries should commence conversations regarding the

RDA standard and its implementation with key stakeholders such as staff, library boards or committees and the greater university management with the potential sources of financing the implementation central to these engagements.

- The Consortium of Academic and Research Libraries in Ghana (CARLIGH), Association of Higher Education Librarians and their Deputies (AHELD) and Ghana Library Association (GLA) should collaborate with international organisations to offer RDA training to cataloguers in Ghana, as was one in 2012 in partnership with INASP.
- Library management should develop an action plan for an extended RDA preparatory period, with preparatory activities, and timelines. Library management should commence the process of verifying the compatibility of their prevailing ILS to the RDA standard.
- Library management of libraries that have yet to implement RDA should open a channel of communication with the UEW library, with the goal of collaborating with them and understudying their RDA implementation methods.

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