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Application of Resource Description and Access (RAD) standards in Iraqi University Libraries: A field study at the Central Library of the University of Baghdad

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine how well the University of Baghdad's Central Library could prepare for the transfer from the AACR2 to the RDA standard. The research was described with the purpose of completing plans for a thorough understanding of the library's technological, institutional, and human challenges, determining present practices, and analyzing RDA standards awareness among personnel. The study employed an applied research method, employing a case study design to provide an in-depth understanding of the library situation. A custom-designed questionnaire was delivered to a population of 106 staff members, yielding 95 replies. Additional data were gathered through interviews to generate qualitative insights, direct observations of cataloging operations, and examination of bibliographic records and training documents. The results revealed significant gaps in staff knowledge of the RDA; in fact, a large portion of the staff received training in specialized skills required for understanding and executing the standard. They observed that, for the most part, cataloging records are still done using MARC21 and traditional cataloging standards, with significant technical issues such as outdated software and inadequate infrastructure. A lack of specialized leadership and internal communication issues were identified as major impediments to content standard adoption. According to the report, RDA should be put into practice since it is expected to significantly enhance resource access and metadata quality. To manage the transformation, it also proposed creating concentrated training courses, improving technical infrastructures, and establishing unified leadership.



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تطبيق معايير وصف المصادر والوصول إليها في المكتبات الجامعية العراقية: دراسة ميدانية في المكتبة المركزية لجامعة بغداد

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الجامعة التقنية الوسطى

الكلية التقنية الادارية -بغداد

المستخلص :

كان الغرض من هذه الدراسة تحديد مدى استعداد المكتبة المركزية لجامعة بغداد للانتقال من معيار AACR2 إلى معيار RDA. وقد تم وصف البحث بغرض استكمال الخطط لفهم شامل للتحديات التكنولوجية والمؤسسية والبشرية التي تواجهها المكتبة، وتحديد الممارسات الحالية، وتحليل الوعي بمعايير RDA بين الموظفين. وقد استخدمت الدراسة أسلوب البحث التطبيقي، باستخدام تصميم دراسة الحالة لتوفير فهم متعمق لوضع المكتبة. تم تسليم استبيان مصمم خصيصًا لسكان يبلغ عددهم 106 من أعضاء هيئة التدريس، وأسفر عن 95 إجابة. تم جمع البيانات الإضافية من خلال المقابلات لتوليد رؤى نوعية، وملاحظات مباشرة لعمليات الفهرسة، وفحص السجلات الببليوغرافية ووثائق التدريب. كشفت النتائج عن فجوات كبيرة في معرفة الموظفين بمعيار RDA؛ في الواقع، تلقى جزء كبير من الموظفين تدريبًا في المهارات المتخصصة المطلوبة لفهم وتنفيذ المعيار. وقد لاحظوا أن فهرسة السجلات في معظمها لا تزال تتم باستخدام MARC21 ومعايير الفهرسة التقليدية، مع وجود مشكلات فنية كبيرة مثل البرامج القديمة والبنية الأساسية غير الكافية. وقد تم تحديد الافتقار إلى القيادة المتخصصة وقضايا الاتصال الداخلي باعتبارها عوائق رئيسية أمام تبني معيار المحتوى. ووفقًا للتقرير، يجب وضع RDA موضع التنفيذ لأنه من المتوقع أن يعزز بشكل كبير من الوصول إلى الموارد وجودة البيانات الوصفية. ولإدارة التحول، اقترح التقرير أيضًا إنشاء دورات تدريبية مكثفة وتحسين البنية الأساسية الفنية وإنشاء قيادة موحدة.

Introduction

Resource Description and Access (RDA) is a contemporary system of cataloguing which aims at creating organized and interrelated metadata to make resources easier to find and access in the digital world. RDA gives detailed instructions on how to catalogue different types of content, which helps libraries, archives and information centers manage their bibliographic information systems. Its foundation is based on the Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records (FRBR) and guarantees that the systems of

cataloguing are responsive to user requirements in querying, identifying and obtaining digital resource.

Instead of depending on static, pre-defined subject lists, cataloguing and indexing must change to accommodate user expectations as libraries move toward a digital-first environment. The RDA Joint Steering Committee created RDA as a more adaptable framework after realizing the shortcomings of the Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules (AACR2) in a digital setting. RDA is intended to generate machine-readable metadata that easily interfaces with contemporary library systems, in contrast to AACR2, which was organized around physical card catalogues.

Resource discovery is improved by metadata developed by RDA, which allows users to discover and authenticate content based on a set of criteria, for example, author or title. Besides, it makes discrimination between similar entities easier, clarifies entity relationships, and achieves nomenclature consistency, all of which result in enhanced search results and end-user experience.

Cataloguing is a process of describing, indexing, and classifying materials in a resource in a systematized way for easier retrieval. Cataloguing ensures materials in a resource are physically and intellectually expressed so it is distinguishable. Professional organization-approved cataloguing conventions provide for precision and consistency in various systems of a library, which increase data access.

While in developed countries, RDA is widely practiced, its application in Iraq is limited due to budget deficiencies, a dearth of appropriate technical training, and a minimal institution-wide awareness. The above contribute towards inhibiting effective cataloguing, hence making discoverability and

access of materials challenging. This paper views the University of Baghdad Central Library, a large university, in an effort to examine these factors and find ways of improving usage of RDA in universities in Iraq.

For this new digital environment, cataloguing and indexing must adapt so it is oriented toward users, not based on hypothetical, outdated subject lists. RDA is a continuation of the foundation laid down by the Anglo–American Cataloguing Rules (AACR), and it is recognized by the RDA Joint Steering Committee of the 1990s that AACR2 was not adequate for users in the 21st century. Contrary to its predecessor, which is rooted in non–digital citation forms and linear card catalogues, RDA is constructed so it can output metadata in a form which can be well handled by current computer systems.

Metadata developed using RDA helps users accomplish a variety of purposes, such as identifying and confirming entities corresponding to a set of search parameters (for instance, works of a certain writer), and enabling users to make more detailed queries about entities related to these entities. This includes aiding users in confirming searches, distinguishing between entities of similar kind, interpreting reasons for chosen names and titles, clarifying relations between entities, and clarifying in which ways an entity is identified under different names and titles.

Cataloguing is a process of describing, indexing, and classifying materials in a library for maximum recall, in conformity with predetermined bibliographic conventions. The major responsibility of cataloguing is to provide detailed information in a correct and thorough physical and intellectual description of an item so it can be differentiated from other materials. This is achieved utilizing authoritative cataloguing conventions and regulations sanctioned by

professional societies, which promote precision and standardization in generating bibliographic data in catalogues of a library.

Although it is practiced extensively in developed nations, its introduction in Iraq is being met by a variety of challenging factors. Some of these factors include a variety of shortages of resources, a lack of appropriate technical training, and a relatively low awareness of the utility of using RDA. The current study attempts to study the usage of RDA standards in the University of Baghdad Library, in an attempt to enhance cataloguing practices in line with current requirements of university libraries in Iraq .

Research questions

1. To what extent do librarians perceive the transition from AACR2 to RDA as necessary, and what benefits do they associate with this shift?
2. What modifications do librarians consider essential for bibliographic records to align with RDA standards?
3. What adjustments do librarians find necessary in library software to support the implementation of RDA standards effectively?
4. What are the primary challenges—technical, institutional, and human—that librarians face when implementing RDA?

Objectives of the research

1. Assess librarians' awareness of the importance of transitioning from AACR2 to RDA standards.
2. Identify the necessary modifications to the bibliographic records for compliance with RDA standards.
3. Analyze the software requirements for the effective implementation of RDA standards in library systems.

4. Investigate the challenges faced by librarians in implementing RDA standards.

Significance of the Study

The contribution of this research is in its support of cataloguing practices in university libraries in Iraq. Since RDA is now an international standard for bibliographic description, it is critical for Iraq to learn about its opportunities and challenges for its implementation in a bid to promote its library services. This study provides insights on librarians' perception of the transition from AACR2 to RDA, focusing on librarians' actual experiences in adopting this new standard.

Furthermore, this study addresses a critical literature gap in regard to the usage of RDA in university libraries in Iraq, in this situation, in the University of Baghdad Central Library. With an understanding of the primary technical, institutional, and human barriers to adopting RDA, this study makes evidence-based recommendations for a smoother transition. Policymakers, librarians, and universities can learn from these outcomes in understanding how best to modernize bibliographic systems and make materials more accessible in a digital era.

Additionally, there is a broader applicability of this study in other developing countries. The study is of interest in other developing countries, which face similar roadblocks in adopting RDA, and hence can serve as a reference for international discussion on cataloguing standardization. The study can serve as a guide for other universities in this region in an attempt to standardize cataloguing practices.

Previous Studies

Previous studies on the implementation of RDA rules in Iraq show multiple challenges. For example, study sought (Younis, Abbas,2021) to test the

applicability of cataloging regulations in conformity with the RDA standard at Al-Mustansiriya University Library. The goal was to identify gaps and deficiencies and suggest appropriate solutions for each of these challenges. Because RDA standards are only used to catalog printed books in Arabic, Kurdish, English, and French—a total of 1,776 books out of 231,364—the study concluded that their use is inadequate. Because catalogers in the Automated Systems Division's KOHA system unit only took 13 courses, the investigation also found a dearth of specific training programs for applying these regulations. Based on these results, the study suggested that RDA rules be applied more widely in all library departments in order to guarantee that all information resources are cataloged and to give users access to an advanced search function. It also underlined the necessity of increasing the number of graduates with academic credentials in the information and library fields in order to improve cataloging operations, especially given the ongoing growth of the library's collection through gifts, exchanges, and purchases.

Another study (Bizan & Tape, 2021) This study aims to determine the degree of need and preparedness of the University of Algiers 2 central library as a model for Algerian university libraries to transition from traditional standards to newer standards and use the RDA standard. On the one hand, we will identify the various technical, human, and material capabilities available to achieve such a goal, and on the other hand, we will try to stand on the various, but there are issues and obstacles that prevent it.

And another study research was carried (Ismail & Ismail, 2024) out to research a contemporary trend within the profession of cataloging, which is the norm for the description of sources and making them retrievable RDA research addressed the definition of the RDA instructions are the contemporary

cataloguing norm utilized for describing the content of digital materials, their applications and purpose, the similarities and differences In the AACR guidelines and RDA, the role of RDA in the context of indexing, advantages of a shift from AACR to RDA, and the level of the flexibility it offers with its tools, the RDA Toolkit, as well as the research introducing linked data technology. and how it relates to the new the norm and the degree of its significance in the area of information searching and retrieval as it is the gateway to obtain the new data encoding standard BIBFRAME after MARC 21 ,and an overview of what linked data technology can provide for indexing especially, as well as for libraries overall. The primary findings that the research identified were the unavoidable nature of to RDA guidelines because of their importance. In meeting the needs of beneficiaries through their reliance on FRBR conceptual models and linked data technology implementation in order to attain an interconnected search by internet users in more than one database via relational databases

Literature Review

Evolution of cataloging standards: from AACR2 to RDA

Anglo–American Cataloging:

An alternative standards creation methodology is the Joint Steering Committee (JSC) for Revision of AACR, which was formed in 1974. It was originally made up of delegates from professional library associations and national libraries in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada. An Australian representative joined in 1981. Its task was to create and invite ideas for rule modifications from its constituents, as well as to commence the process of debate, adoption, rejection, or request that proposals be redrafted and re – submitted. It completed these activities on a continuous basis rather than just

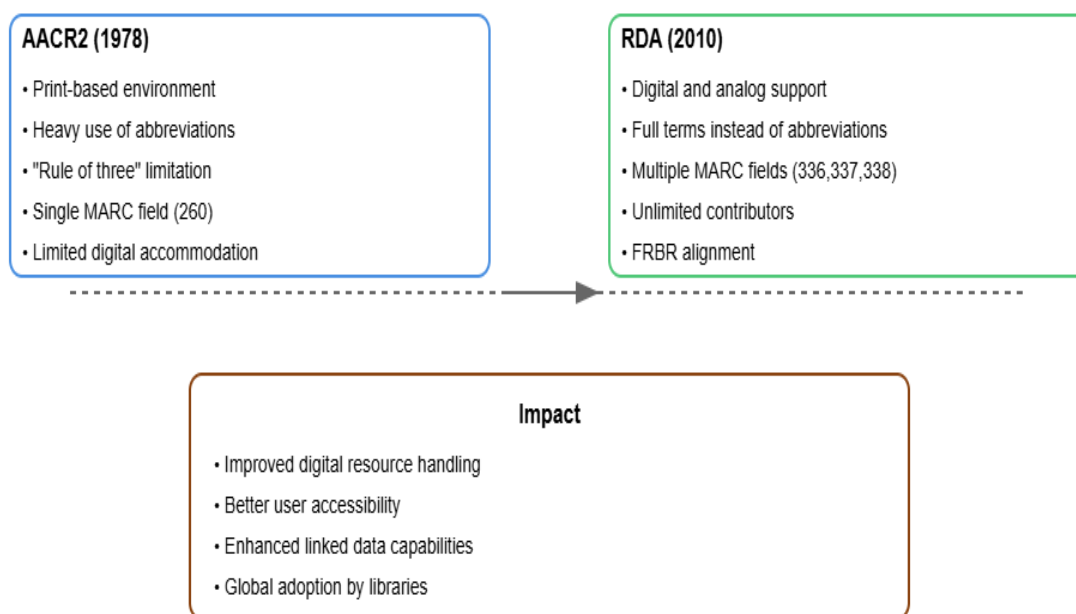
when needed. It was funded through sales of the cataloging standards it established, with the Committee of Principals (COP) overseeing the publishing business. AACR2 has been modified on occasion over the years, with notable revisions in 1988 (2nd edition, 1988 revision) and 2002 (2nd edition, 2002 revision). The 2002 edition made significant revisions to the sections for non – book items. A program of annual updates began in 2003 and ended in 2005. An updated index has been created to reflect the changes and correct errors in the 1998 edition. The environment in which the code runs has undergone significant change since the second edition of the foundations was published in 1978. The rise of the web, and hence the increased usage and sharing of electronic resources, has had a significant impact. In response to the challenges posed by these new surroundings, the Joint Steering Committee for Revision of AACR (JSC) has embarked on an ambitious program of research and reform, beginning with the International Conference on the Principles and Future Development of AACR, command in the provincial capital in 1997. [\(Spink, HeinStrom ,2012\).](#)

Resource Description and Access (RDA):

Is the 21st-century cataloging standard. RDA is the new cataloging standard that will replace the Anglo–American Cataloging Rules, Second Edition in 2009. RDA differs from AACR2 in that it is based on a theoretical foundation, is built for the digital environment, and has a greater scope. RDA departs from previous cataloging systems in that it provides suggestions for cataloging digital resources as well as a greater emphasis on assisting users in noticing, identifying, selecting, and obtaining the information they want. RDA also supports clusters of bibliographical entries that demonstrate ties between works and their producers. This important new feature increases consumers’

awareness of a work's various editions, translations, or physical versions, which is an exciting development. ([Randall, 2011](#)) The RDA, like AACR, is made up of a group of sensible directives. However, RDA is based on a theoretical framework that determines the structure and content of the new standard. Understanding RDA requires alignment with two abstract models: bibliographical Records (FRBR) and Authority Knowledge (FRI). FRAD is an expansion of the FRBR model. ([Olivet, 2010](#)). Figure 1 presents a visual overview of the distinctions between AACR2 and RDA, along with the wider implications of this change.

Figure 1: Evolution of Cataloging Standards: AACR2 to RDA



Source: Prepared by the researcher considering previous studies

Underlying Models of RDA:

Functional Requirement for Records (FRBR) From 1992 to 1995, the Study Group on Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records (FRBR)

created an entity relationship model that served as a generalized view of the bibliographic universe, irrespective of any cataloging code or implementation. The FRBR report itself contains a description of the conceptual model (the entities, relationships, and attributes, or metadata as we call them today), a proposed national-level bibliographic record for all types of materials, and user tasks associated with the bibliographic resources described in catalogs, bibliographies, and other bibliographic tools.

FRBR includes groups of entities:

- **Group 1** entities include *work*, *expression*, *manifestation*, and *item* (WEMI). They symbolize the results of an intellectual or artistic endeavour.
 1. *Work*: A distinctive intellectual or creative creation.
 2. *Expression*: means the intellectual or artistic manifestation of a work.
 3. *Manifestation*: refers to the tangible embodiment of a work's expression.
 4. *Item*: a single manifestation.
- **Group 2** entities include *individuals*, *families*, and *corporations* which are in charge of Group 1's intellectual or artistic endeavors.
- **Group 3** entities include *intellectual endeavors* by Group 1 or Group 2, as well as events and places. Include concepts and things. ([Wolverton, 2011](#)).

After comprehending the basic models and theoretical framework of RDA, the next step is to investigate its practical application. This is where the RDA Toolkit plays an important role.

RDA Toolkit:

The RDA standard is offered in two formats: printed and online. The major advantage of purchasing online is that it is always updated in real time, so the librarian does not need to purchase the new version. He already receives updates as soon as adjustments and enhancements are made.

Furthermore, the librarian has access to extensive material for the comprehension and training of information professionals in the online edition, which is accessed through a program called the "RDA Toolkit". Accessing the standard online requires a subscription and a reasonable payment. This access is supplied through the RDA Toolkit (which we shall discuss later), and the subscription can be purchased for an individual user or an institutional user, which provides one access at a time; if the institution wants simultaneous access, it must pay an additional charge for each user. The value can be quoted in US dollars, Canadian dollars, British pounds, Australian dollars, Euros, and Singapore dollars, depending on the subscriber's location ([Cavalcanti, 2013](#)). Users can engage with various cataloging-related documents and resources, including the RDA standard, through the integrated, browser-based online solution known as the RDA Toolkit. The Library of Congress Policy Statements (LCPS):

- The full text document of the RDA.
- The AACR2 document to help you get started.
- Workflows and other procedural documentation produced by subscribers that can be distributed within an organization or to the entire subscriber community.
- RDA mappings to different coding schemes, such as MARC 21, are among the additional resources accessible through the Toolkit.

The RDA Toolkit can be browsed or searched in several ways, and its appearance can be changed. Workflows and mappings (matching tables) are two capabilities of the Toolkit that can help integrate RDA into routine tasks and provide users the flexibility to import and create unique files and documents. Training, familiarization with the standard's content, and proficiency

with the new networking tool are all necessary for implementing the RDA. ([Oliver, 2011](#)).

Global Training and Implementation Strategies for Resource Description and Access (RDA): Insights from Key International Initiatives

With the official participation of representatives from the four authoring countries of the standard—[Australia](#), [Canada](#), [Great Britain](#), and [the United States](#)—the RDA's content was developed as an international initiative that coordinated plans and decisions that were divided among the four authoring countries ([Oliver, 2011](#)). National library organizations in other English-speaking nations, including [Australia](#), [New Zealand](#), [Canada](#), and [Great Britain](#), also polled practitioners on the new cataloging code before the US RDA tests. These surveys provided more information about "cataloger's needs" and "preferred methods for training." ([Park, Tosaka, 2015](#)). The official test was divided into three stages, as stated by ([Hanford, 2014](#)):

- (a) the RDA participants' training phase, which ran from early 2010 to September 30, 2010.
- (b) the record production phase, which ran from October 1, 2010, to December 31, 2010, and produced records and surveys of the creation process.
- (c) the review phase, which ran from January 1, 2011, to March 31, 2011,

During which the US RDA Test Coordinating Committee approved the survey results and prepared a report for the administration of the three national libraries.

According to ([Oliver, 2011](#); [Mansor, Ramdzan, 2014](#)), the RDA awareness-raising campaign in Canada began in 2008. Building on these early awareness efforts, the Canadian Committee on Cataloging (CCC) played an important role in keeping the Canadian cataloging community informed

about the RDA's creation, adjustments, and presentations. This proactive participation created the groundwork for formal and informal training, which, as [\(Cross, et al ,2014\)](#) pointed out, is essential for efficiently implementing any new standard. However, the implementation process revealed major disparities in how training was delivered to English– and French–speaking catalogers. The English–speaking organizations relied on decentralized activities, frequently driven by individual efforts and internet resources, but the French –speaking community benefited from a coordinated effort spearheaded by the team in charge of translating RDA into French. This crew became an invaluable resource for catalogers in French–speaking Canada. To assess RDA readiness, the Canadian Library Association's Technical Services Interest Group (TSIG) conducted surveys between 2009 and 2010. These surveys rated catalogers' awareness and preferred training techniques. These surveys provided direct feedback on the construction of targeted training modules, which were critical for meeting the specific needs of catalogers . During the testing phase, the Library of Congress (LC) created detailed training modules demonstrating how to use RDA in a MARC 21 environment. These lessons, made freely available online, constituted the first significant resource for RDA training, setting a standard for subsequent training projects. [\(Cross, et al, 2014\).](#)

Similar to the testing procedure in the United States, Australia devised a planned timeline for implementing the RDA standard, which began in mid–2011 and will end in 2013. To incorporate RDA into local collective catalogs, the National Library of Australia (NLA) reviewed existing cataloging policies, made changes to the Australian National Bibliographic Database (ANBD), and

adjusted access points to meet the new standard ([United States RDA Test Coordinating Committee, 2011](#)).

According to the NLA, the Australian Committee on Cataloging (ACOC) offered various guidelines on its website to aid libraries through the RDA implementation process ([NLA, 2019](#)):

- **Availability of the RDA Toolkit:** Libraries must have access to the RDA implementation instructions. The RDA Toolkit is available to print; however, the online edition is strongly recommended due to its real-time updates. Libraries must select the appropriate license based on the number of concurrent users before subscribing to the online service. Libraries must organize and deliver RDA training targeted to the various staff functions. Catalogers, for example, need more specialized training than reference librarians, and some require further training for certain types of items such as movies, music, or serials. Libraries can either teach their own personnel or employ external trainers for this reason. The British Library (BL) declared its intention to adopt the RDA in 2008; however, full implementation was postponed until April 2013 due to the time required to publish the North American test results. The change was a logical progression for the BL, which had been using AACR2R since 1981. During the implementation, adequate time was set aside to customize the training materials to match with the local rules and practices ([Morillo, et al, 2015](#)). To guarantee effective implementation, numerous solutions were designed to satisfy the diverse demands of the library staff:
- **RDA Trainers:** Trainers received specialized training in giving training, which was supplemented by materials provided by the Library of Congress. The

trainers were encouraged to practice and provide feedback or issues, which were used to improve the training materials.

- **Processing Teams:** Teams responsible for procurement, copy cataloging, finishing, and shelving received on-the-job training. While there were some classroom sessions, most training was done in groups, with catalogers educating team supervisors. Catalogers received more advanced training, with an emphasis on the FRBR model and RDA ideas. Before the formal training, knowledge-building sessions and reviews of existing materials were held. Training involved the creation of procedures for documenting application policies and choices. These workflows not only helped catalogers, but they also became essential to the training process. Many of these workflows are now publicly accessible thanks to the RDA Toolkit ([Danskin, 2014](#)).

According to ([Morillo, et al ,2015](#)), new training modules were developed, including an internal course that allowed records to be cataloged using RDA rather than MARC. The RDA in Many Metadata Formats (RIMMF) tool, developed by The MARC of Quality, was presented to assist cataloging in non-traditional MARC formats. This comprehensive strategy emphasizes the significance of providing strong training and adaptable implementation tactics to allow a smooth transition to RDA standards.

Challenges in Adopting the RDA in Iraq:

The application of the RDA standard in Iraq is still facing several challenges, as some research papers and analytical studies illustrate. RDA is a cataloging standard developed in accordance with the needs of the digital age and based on a more flexible and user-oriented description of resources than its predecessor, namely the Anglo-American Cataloging Rules (AACR2). The

successful path of Australia, Canada, and the USA has been paved by strong institutional support and infrastructure. However, the implementation of the standard in Iraq, like any other region, falls short due to several reasons:

Lack of Awareness and Training:

1. The other big challenge relates to the awareness of the RDA standard among information specialists in Iraq.
2. Library professionals have difficulty grasping RDA terms and concepts because they have not undergone sufficient training on this important standard.
3. The switch to RDA from AACR2 entails specialized training, which is constantly lacking or inaccessible in Iraq, leaving a huge gap in the proper knowledge and expertise to use the standard effectively.

These challenges are well documented in several studies, including [\(Abdullah, Shihab, 2021\)](#) who discussed the challenges of implementing RDA in “the Central Library of the Northern Technical University that is included in the KOHA system using MARC21 records,”.

[\(Monyela, 2020\)](#), who highlighted similar issues in Sub-Saharan Africa in their study, “Challenges of Resource Description and Access (RDA) Implementation in Sub-Saharan Africa”.

[\(Shehata,2020\)](#) who examined the impact of (RDA) on the quality of searching and retrieving information sources.”

[\(Ali,2023\)](#) in his study titled “Cataloging and Classifying Manuscripts According to the MARC21 Standard and RDA Rules: A Case Study of the Iraqi Manuscripts House" highlighted that the Iraqi Manuscripts House does not use MARC21 or RDA for indexing its manuscripts. This is due to the absence of

qualified staff capable of applying these standards and a lack of financial support to train staff and implement modern cataloging practices.

Technical and infrastructural barriers:

1. The implementation of RDA depends heavily on the availability of newer library management systems and digital infrastructure. Where some libraries in Iraq are still using aging systems to implement RDA, the switch has remained challenging.
2. The lack of power supply, slow speed of internet, and poor quality of other ICT tools really serve as other obstacles to the success of RDA implementation.
3. Limitations in Financial Resources Implementing the RDA means incurring financial costs for training, upgrades of infrastructure, and system modifications. However, many libraries in Iraq have very limited budgets and thus find it impossible to divert resources for RDA implementation.

This issue is not unique to Iraq. For example:

([Osman, El-Masry,2016](#)) highlighted similar challenges in Arab libraries in their study” Challenges in Using International Standards and Integrated Library Management Systems.”

([Monyela, 2020](#)) also pointed out the infrastructural barriers in Sub-Saharan Africa in his study, “Challenges of Resource Description and Access (RDA) Implementation in Sub-Saharan Africa”.

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qualified staff capable of applying these standards and a lack of financial support to train staff and implement modern cataloging practices.

Language and Cultural Challenges

1. It has unique problems in cataloging Arabic script materials via RDA.
2. The standard, developed mainly in English, does not cover the complex areas of Arabic language cataloging, which are causing difficulties in applying RDA to Arabic materials in libraries in Iraq .
3. In addition, the absence of locality examples and guidelines of RDA in reference to Arabic resources exaggerates the issues faced in this particular area.

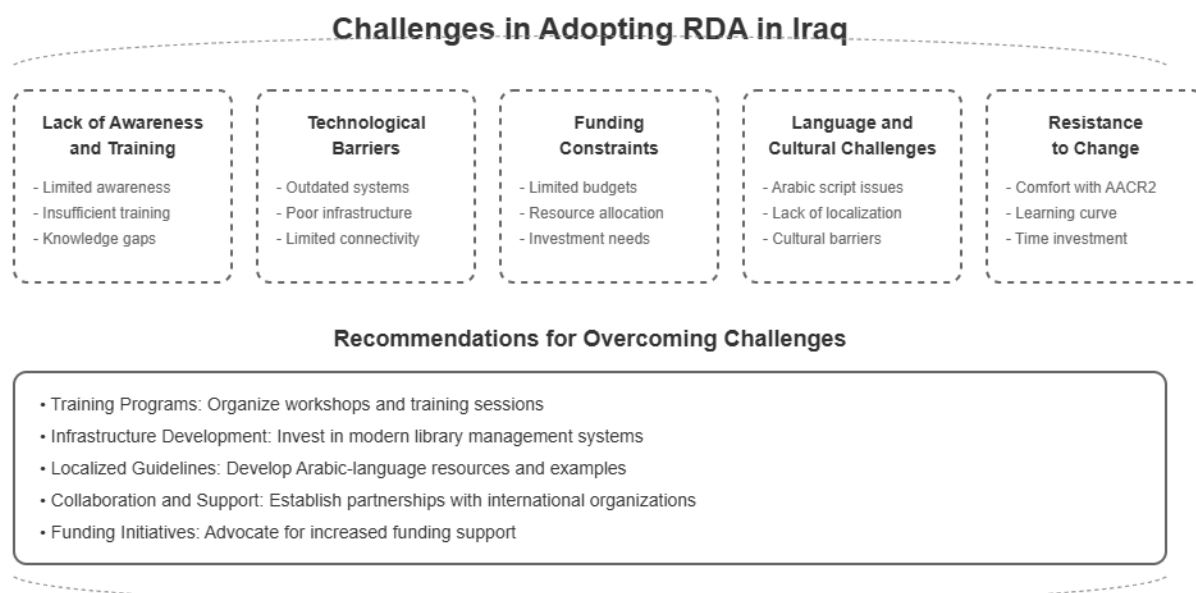
In general, however, there has been professional resistance to the new set of principles, comparable to other major changes. Many bibliographic professionals are accustomed to AACR2 and thus they find it difficult to put any time and effort into learning and adopting RDA. This gap in technological advancement has slowed the adoption of international cataloging standards, including the RDA:

([Younes, Abbas ,2021](#)) conducted a study on “the Application of The Rules of (RDA) in The Central Library at Al–Mustansiriya University: An Evaluation Study” They found that RDA was primarily used to categorize paper volumes in Arabic, Kurdish, English, and French, but only a small fraction of their total collection (1,776 out of 231,364 items) was cataloged using RDA.

([Ali,2023](#)) in his study titled “Cataloging and Classifying Manuscripts According to the MARC21 Standard and RDA Rules: A Case Study of the Iraqi Manuscripts House” highlighted that the Iraqi Manuscripts House does not use MARC21 or RDA for indexing its manuscripts. This is due to the absence of

qualified staff capable of applying these standards and a lack of financial support to train staff and implement modern cataloging practices.

As discussed by ([Osman,2016](#)) these challenges are not unique to Iraq and are also observed in other regions. For example, in the research” Challenges in Using International Standards and Integrated Library Management Systems,” the author examines the difficulties faced by Arab libraries in the era of the information revolution. Figure 2 presents a visual overview of the Challenges in Adopting RDA in Iraq.



Source: Prepared by the researcher considering previous studies

Findings

1. Overview of the Central Library’s Cataloging System:

While the Central Library of the University of Baghdad has an earlier cataloging system that is mainly based on MARC21, which was historical during the interim, that is very limited regarding such application and incorporation of newer catalog standards like RDA due to the unavailability of proper infrastructure and necessary software. Most cataloging records still follow traditional cataloging rules such as AACR2, with only a minority of items

cataloged according to the newer RDA guidelines. The staff is very unaware of such newer standards, contributing to the delinquency with which the RDA is being adopted.

2. Extent of RDA Adoption:

RDA is still being implemented in the Central Library. As observed, around 10–15% of the total collection has been cataloged under the RDA standard. Most of these are in English language materials, although other languages, especially Arabic and Kurdish, are mostly still cataloged in AACR2. This limited scope of implementation is due to the nonavailability of trained personnel, lack of technical resources, and institutional problems, including the existence of outdated software and insufficient funding.

3. Challenges Faced in Implementing RDA:

There are several challenges to the full implementation of RDA at the Central Library:

- **Most of the staff members working in the library** are not aware of the RDA. Although a lot of them were exposed to AACR2, they did not receive training in RDA. This lack of knowledge is one of the strongest barriers to the full adoption of RDA.
- **Lack of Proper Infrastructure:** The cataloging system in the library currently does not support RDA fully, causing difficulties in changing the standards. Other limitations imposed by slow internet connectivity and inadequate technical support, coupled with an outdated library management system, further contributed to these problems.
- **Financial constraints:** Working within a budget, the university library must settle down for other issues like improvement in infrastructures, training of staff, and other software installations. All these expenditures cannot be

prioritized; thus, the implementation of the RDA is suspended without a chance of reconsideration.

4. Impact of RDA on Metadata Quality and User Access:

The scant introduction of RDA at the Central Library has had diverse ramifications on metadata quality and user access.

- First, **under metadata quality**: "For a handful of the portion of the materials cataloged with RDA, the metadata quality has been upgraded, with easier – to–understand descriptions, a clearer link between resources, and better uniformity among records. On the other hand, the major bulk of materials still recorded using AACR2 includes slightly outdated metadata that makes the entire catalog not useful at all".
- Regarding **user access**, RDA would enhance discovery through richer and finer metadata– that is, better navigation. However, current hybrid cataloging, with the mix of RDA and AACR2 records, may be troublesome to users. For the user searching for the information, he may have to wrench various descriptions and search results. RDA has not really been fully applied; hence, users would not reap the full benefits of RDA's modern user–centered cataloging.

Thus, it indicates that there is a great possibility of RDA improving the quality of cataloging at the Central Library; various obstacles have to be negotiated if RDA is to be fully employed. RDA–enhanced cataloging will bring its dividends in enhanced metadata quality and user access if appropriate investment is undertaken in training, infrastructure, and financial resources.

Methodology

Research Approach

This study is an applied study using a case study approach in an attempt to measure the readiness of the Central Library of Baghdad University in adopting an alternative cataloging system, which is a transition from AACR2 to RDA. The case study approach is chosen since it provides a rich, in-depth understanding of an institution's opportunities, challenges, and factors in adopting an alternative cataloging system such as RDA in an Iraqi university. This is particularly well-suited for examining actual practices, policy analysis, and identifying concrete barriers in its implementation, which can go unapparent in large studies.

Scope and Limitations of the Study

The study is limited to the Baghdad University Library, which makes it inapplicable for other university libraries in Iraq. The outcome can, nonetheless, give other university libraries in similar contexts valuable insights. The study is not on public, school, or private institution libraries. The study, despite taking into account the technical, institutional, and human factors that affect the realization of RDA, is not a study of transition in the long-run outcome due to time factors.

Data Collection Tools

In a quest for a balanced study, this study employs a combined data collection process, which entails qualitative and quantitative data collecting strategies:

1. Surveys (Questionnaire)

The researcher developed a well-formulated questionnaire in an effort to gauge:

- Institutional readiness for transition towards utilizing RDA. Current cataloging practices in MARC21.

- Librarians' experience and comprehension of utilizing RDA.
- The questionnaire was dispatched to 106 cataloging, classifying, and other related staff. 95 of them responded, which is an adequate response.

2. Interviews (Formal & Informal)

Library practitioners and academics were interviewed using semi-structured interviews in order to elicit in-depth insights on:

- Impressions of cataloging standards.
- Challenges facing catalogers in establishing and implementing RDA.
- Training requirements and support for adopting RDA."

3. Direct Observations

Observations were conducted to analyze:

- Enumerating current cataloging practices and techniques.
- Bibliographic control using software programs.
- Use of the RDA Toolkit and its integration in existing systems.

4. Document Analysis

Pertinent documents, such as cataloging policy, exemplar records, training materials, and procedural guidance, were reviewed in order to:

- Contrast current cataloging practices with the requirements of RDA.
- Identify gaps in documentation and training for RDA implementation

Data Analysis Approaches

1. Quantitative Analysis

Descriptive statistics have been used in examining survey data on:

- Demographic details of respondents.
- Level of expertise among cataloging staff.

2. Qualitative Analysis

Thematic analysis of observations and interviews assisted in identifying recurring themes in regards to:

- Challenges and opportunities of RDA implementation.
- Impressions of cataloging experts about the transition toward RDA.

Methodological Justification

The combined use of survey data, on-site observations, document analysis, and interviews provides a comprehensive assessment of university libraries' readiness for RDA adoption. Utilizing multiple data sources strengthens the validity and credibility of the study, ensuring that it offers evidence-based, practical recommendations for enhancing cataloging practices in Iraqi university libraries.

Statistical analysis

The questionnaire was created using a related and comparable researcher, like ([Caesar, Eichel, 2009](#)). 18 items on a 3-point Likert scale (agree, Neutral, and disagree) made up the questionnaire. The data were analyzed using SPSS 25 statistical software once the surveys were collected. The dependability of the research tool was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The questionnaire's alpha coefficient was 0.866, and since this value is greater than 0.7, it was determined that the evaluation tool's dependability is likewise adequate and desirable. Table 1 alpha coefficient.

Table 1: alpha coefficient

No. of items	alpha coefficient	Validation of the questionnaire
18	0.866	0.930

Source: Statistical Analysis

Additionally, the KMO¹ and Bartlett tests as well as the structural validity approach were applied to evaluate the measuring instrument's validity. Table 2 presents the test findings.

Table 2: Assessment tool validity test results

No. of items	Bartlett's Test	(significance level)	KMO
Q1	42.436	0.000	0.677
Q2	80.819	0.000	0.685
Q3	65.557	0.000	0.715
Q4	71.555	0.000	0.708

Source: Statistical Analysis

The table shows that the Bartlett test's significance level is 0.000 ($P < 0.05$) and the KMO is 0.677, 0.685, 0.715, 0.708. Consequently, it can be said that the created questionnaire has a desirable and appropriate validity.

Results

Descriptive findings and the results of the frequency distribution of the respondent's gender; Number of years of experience working in the library and Job role are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Descriptive findings the results of the frequency distribution of the respondent's

	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	70	%73.7
Female	25	%26.3
Total	95	%100
Number of years of experience working in the library		
Less than 5 years	13	%13.7

¹ Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Test for Sampling Adequacy

5 Less than 10 years	31	%32.6
10 Less than 15 years	18	%18.9
More than 15 years	33	%34.7
Total	95	%100
Job role		
Cataloging Staff	47	%49.5
Technical Staff	44	%46.3
Supervisor or Manager	4	%4.2
Total	95	%100

Source: Statistical Analysis

The results in the table above summarize the demographic distribution among the respondents:

- **Gender Distribution** :most respondents were male, comprising 73.7% of the total sample, while female respondents accounted for 26.3%.
- **Years of Experience in the Library**: 13.7% of the respondents indicated that they have served for less than 5 %13.7years; %32.6 had experience varying from 5 to less than 10 years;%18.9 did have ten to fifteen–year experience; A maximum of 34.7% possessed more than fifteen–year experience.
- **Job Roles**: Nearly half, 49.5%, were identified as Cataloging Staff; Technical Staff comprised 46.3%; A marginal percentage of 4.2% was any supervisory or managerial role.

Inferential findings **Q 1**: To what extent do librarians perceive the transition from AACR2 to RDA as necessary, and what benefits do they associate with this shift? In this study, four items were designed and used to answer the first question. The frequency distribution of items related to the first research question is given in Table 4.

Table 4 Frequency distribution of the answers to the items of the first question

Options Items	%Disagree	%Neutral	%Agree	Mean
I understand the RDA standard completely	%27.4	%18.9	%53.7	2.26
Using RDA in the library is now feasible.	%25.3	%35.8	%38.9	2.14
More than just Anglo–American regulations, the RDA is a facilitator.	%30.5	%44.2	%25.3	1.95
RDA, in my opinion, is beneficial for the library.	%27.4	%28.4	%44.2	2.17
Total				2.1289

Source: Statistical Analysis

As can be seen in Table 4: 53.7% of the respondents agreed that they understood the RDA standard completely, while 27.4% disagreed. Librarian respondents tended to express a moderate understanding of RDA, as indicated by a mean score of 2.26. The majority believe they are reasonably familiar with RDA. [Regarding the second item](#), 38.9% of respondents agreed that implementing RDA in the library is a practical idea, while 25.3% disagreed and 35.8% were neutral. The mean score (2.14) indicated a somewhat mixed perception of feasibility, which might indicate some uncertainties or barriers toward practical implementation. [Concerning the third item](#), only 25.2% agreed that RDA is more than just Anglo–American regulations and can be a facilitator that offers more opportunities, whereas 44.2% retained neutral views and 30.5% disagreed with it. Since it had a mean score of 1.95, it got the lowest mark, which could mean that many librarians are not very aware of RDA's broader benefits, besides being a standard. [Regarding the fourth item](#), 44.2% agreed that RDA is beneficial for the library, while 27.4% disagreed and 28.4% were neutral. The mean score of 2.17 from the neutral responses indicates

generally positive perceptions of RDA's potential benefits, suggesting that some librarians have not yet recognized its full value.

Inferential findings **Q 2: What modifications do librarians consider essential for bibliographic records to align with RDA standards?** In this study, five items were designed and used to answer the second question. The frequency distribution of items related to the second research question is given in Table 5.

Table 5 Frequency distribution of the answers to the items of the second question

Options Items	%Disagree	%Neutral	%Agree	Mean
Correcting flaws and mistakes in records (in terms of cataloging) is a prerequisite for using RDA.	%20.0	%23.2	%56.8	2.37
Verifying the technical state of the records (in terms of editing) is required before using RDA.	%43.2	%25.3	%31.6	1.88
To make cataloging easier, core information (based on RDA) must be provided.	%34.7	%32.6	%32.6	1.98
Inconsistent data in the records must be corrected in order for the changes to be applied automatically.	%27.4	%38.9	%32.6	2.05
When creating functional models and data relational structures, records must be logically communicated.	%34.7	%26.3	%38.9	2.04
Total				2.065

Source: Statistical Analysis

As can be seen in Table 5: [about the first item](#), respondents overwhelmingly supported it as a priority before RDA can be implemented (56.8%), with the mean score standing at 2.37. [Regarding the second item](#), only 31.6% agreed on verifying the technical state of records before employing RDA, while 43.2% disagreed. With a mean score of 1.88, this item reflects a lack of consensus or priority concerning technical verification, possibly due to limited technical deployment by the absent expert or the tools. [Concerning the third item](#), the responses were dichotomously divided, in which 32.6% agreed, 32.6% were neutral, and 34.7% disagreed. The mean score of 1.98 indicates due recognition for the alteration. [Regarding the fourth item](#), only 32.6% agreed on the need for inconsistent data correction in cases of automated changes, whereas 27.4% disagreed and 38.9% remained neutral. The mean score of 2.05 could suggest that, indeed, there is a moderately positive recognition of the acknowledgment of this alteration, with some lack of clarity in the minds of the interviewees. [Also](#), 38.9% opined to be in accordance with the logical communication of records being essential; on the other hand, 34.7% voiced disapproval. According to the Mean Score indicates (2.04).

Inferential findings **Q 3**: What adjustments do librarians find necessary in library software to support the implementation of RDA standards effectively? In this study, four items were designed and used to answer the third question. The frequency distribution of items related to the third research question is given in Table6.

Table 6 Frequency distribution of the answers to the items of the third question

Options Items	%Disagree	%Neutral	%Agree	Mean
In the library program, the help choices	37.9	25.3	36.8	1.99

must be used in the right quantity and for each field independently				
Estimating the likelihood that the program structure will be modified to meet the requirements of each library.	34.7	29.5	35.8	2.01
The RDA Iraq adaptation table can be used with the library software.	22.1	37.9	40.0	2.18
It should be considered to modify the library software's search and resource retrieval structure in accordance with the new RDA rules.	37.9	30.5	31.6	1.94
Total				2.0286

Source: Statistical Analysis

As can be seen in Table 6: [about the first item](#), 36.8% of respondents agreed that help choices in the library program should be appropriate for each field, while 37.9% disagreed .The mean score (1.99) indicates moderate agreement. [Regarding the second item](#), 35.8% of respondents agreed that the program structure modification is needed to meet the library's requirements, 34.7% disagreed with the statement, while 29.5% stayed neutral .This item, with the mean score (2.01) received by its note, denotes the relative strength of support for this adjustment compared with other items . [Concerning the third item](#), %40.0of respondents agreed that the RDA Iraq adaptation table works . with library software, while 22.1% did not agree and 37.9% remained neutral . This means with respect to the mean score; with a higher mean value of 2.18, this item reflects a comparatively stronger support for this adjustment than others. [Regarding the fourth item](#), %31.6agreed that the structure of search and retrieval in the library software needed to be modified as per the RDA

rules, while 37.9% disagreed. A mean score (1.94) evoked a relatively minor priority assigned to this adjustment, possibly due to an insufficient understanding of its repercussions or a sense of it being complex to put into effect.

Inferential findings **Q 4:** What are the primary challenges—technical, institutional, and human—that librarians face when implementing RDA? In this study, five items were designed and used to answer the fourth question. The frequency distribution of items related to the fourth research question is given in Table 7.

Table 7 Frequency distribution of the answers to the items of the third question

Options Items	%Disagree	%Neutral	%Agree
Communication issues with library patrons	24.2	35.8	38.9
Communication issues inside the library	22.1	29.5	47.4
Insufficient knowledge and information to implement data compatibility.	27.4	35.8	36.8
Issues using the new library software.	34.7	27.4	37.9
Absence of the primary trustee (to enforce RDA regulations)	34.7	21.1	44.2

Source: Statistical Analysis

As can be seen in Table 7, [regarding the first item](#), 38.9% of respondents agreed that communication problems with library patrons constitute a challenge. Although 24.2% disagreed, the neutral number, consisting of 35.8%, still considered such issues. These results have suggested that there was a moderate concern in the area of communication barriers related with patrons' understandings and approaches of RDA-based services. [Regarding the second item](#), 47.4% of respondents agreed that internal communication

among library staff posed the biggest challenge, hence making it the most agreed challenge in this question. Only 22.1% disagreed, while 29.5% were neutral. This brings into focus the issue of establishing and enforcing well-nigh perfect communication among library staff in order to have an efficient implementation of RDA-based services. [Concerning the third item](#), 36.8% of respondents agreed that knowledge and information insufficiency for implementing data compatibility is a challenge, 27.4% disagreed, and 35.8% were neutral. [Regarding the fourth item](#), 37.9% agreed that difficulties with the new library software are another reason limiting RDA implementation, while 34.7% disagreed. [Also](#), 44.2% agreed that the absence of a trustee to enforce RDA regulations is a challenge, while 34.7% disagreed. Perhaps this suggests that it is an institutional obstacle perceived as a pressing lack of centralized leadership or authority in the initiation of the RDA into the regime.

Discussion

The results of the current study, which showed that librarians' perceptions of the switch from AACR2 to RDA had an overall mean of 2.13, revealed gaps in their knowledge of the broader advantages of RDA beyond just a standard, such as how it might enhance metadata quality and user access. To increase knowledge of the advantages of RDA and its real-world applications, systematic training must be developed and put into place. To close this knowledge gap, some workshops might be planned, starting with this review, to compare the perceived benefits of RDA with AACR2. According to the mean of 2.07 responses, librarians believe that bibliographic records must be changed to meet the RDA requirements. Because librarians understand the value of precise and clean records before RDA implementation, they prioritize correcting cataloging problems. The majority influenced the low mean for technical

verification, which could indicate a lack of technical skills or resources. Training on the instruments and software used for technical record validation could help bridge this gap. To help libraries comprehend the importance of each phase, it will be necessary to clearly link technical validation and record revisions to the re-creation of RDA implementation objectives.

Additionally, to the mean of 2.03 response rates on adjustments required in library software to allow the implementation of RDA standards, the overwhelming support for the RDA Iraq adaption table demonstrates the need for RDA implementation strategies. Perhaps because the importance of modifying search and retrieval structures at the institutional level on the RDA for better user experiences was not recognized, little emphasis was placed on their adjustment. Concrete examples of successful implementations in other libraries could help to emphasize the importance of such changes. Therefore, the focus should be on the possible benefits of modifying the program to better align user-searching features with RDA. The greatest hurdle highlighted was internal communication issues (47.4%), while the lack of a major trustee to enforce the RDA requirements (44.2%) appeared as a key institutional bottleneck. Knowledge gaps (36.8%) and software issues (37.9%) were also significant constraints. The findings emphasize the necessity of institutional leadership and internal collaboration in RDA implementation. The pursuit of knowledge gaps via focused training and capacity-building efforts will be critical to removing these hurdles, improve in terms of software infrastructure finding a clear leadership along could address both the technical and institutional challenges.

The current study's findings are consistent with those of prior studies ([Pazouki, et al, 2013](#); [Jahanshahi, et al, 2013](#); [Caesar, Eichel, 2009](#)). Based

on research by ([Fernandez , Cabonero ,2020](#); [Nwachi, et al, 2021](#); [Sanchez ;2010](#)), academic librarians face the most significant challenges in implementing RDA rules due to "problems with switching to new library software" and a lack of sufficient knowledge and skills.

Conclusion

RDA is one of the most current cataloging standards, having replaced the Anglo–American Cataloging Rules (Second Edition). In addition to describing a vast array of print and digital sources, the RDA has addressed many shortcomings of the Anglo–American. RDA is built on conceptual patterns, and it has adjusted its nomenclature and linkages to reflect this, the capacity to more effectively characterize and locate information sources in an online setting.

The RDA standard has replaced Anglo–American cataloging rules in libraries, particularly academic libraries; however, replacing and implementing it in bibliographic records and library software necessitates identifying and resolving existing problems from the perspective of librarians and catalogers. Accordingly, this study examined the difficulties in this area from the viewpoint of academic librarians. The challenges that the librarians raised were as follows, in order of priority: issues with data compatibility, issues with internal library communication, issues with switching to new library software, issues with lack of information and knowledge to implement, issues with communication with library users, and the absence of a main trustee (to apply RDA rules).

The following suggestions can be considered in order to address the problems and difficulties of adopting RDA that are covered in this paper:

1. Setting up an RDA working group to get catalogers' input and expand their understanding.
2. Developing a useful guide for RDA implementation and making it easier for catalogers to access.
3. Verifying bibliographic records for potential mistakes. 4. Including essential information in the bibliographic records (based on RDA).
5. Providing handbooks, instructional manuals, and audio and video training files to enhance professional cataloging expertise; hosting webinars and virtual meetings about RDA with university professors and expert catalogers in attendance.
6. Arranging for consensus-building and opinion-sharing sessions between library system developers and professionals with training and expertise in RDA regulations, such as librarians and catalogers, to implement the required modifications to library system architecture.

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Survey

Appendix. Survey Questions—RDA Implementation in the Central Library of the University of Baghdad

"Dear Participant,

This study evaluates the readiness of the Central Library at the University of Baghdad to implement the RDA (Resource Description and Access) standard. Your responses will be treated with complete confidentiality, and no public reports will include any personal information. Participation is entirely voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time. Please take a few minutes to complete this survey.

Thank you for your cooperation!"

Section ONE: Main Questions

	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
Q1: To what extent do librarians perceive the transition from AACR2 to RDA as necessary, and what benefits do they associate with this shift?			
I understand the RDA standard completely			
Using RDA in the library is now feasible.			
More than just Anglo–American regulations, the RDA is a facilitator.			
RDA, in my opinion, is beneficial for the library.			
Q2: What modifications do librarians consider essential for bibliographic records to align with RDA standards?			
Correcting flaws and mistakes in records (in terms of cataloging) is a prerequisite for using RDA.			
Verifying the technical state of the records (in terms of editing) is required before using RDA.			
To make cataloging easier, core information (based on RDA) must be provided.			
Inconsistent data in the records must be corrected in order for the changes to be applied automatically.			
When creating functional models and data relational structures, records must be logically communicated.			
Q3: What adjustments do librarians find necessary in library software to support the implementation of RDA standards effectively?			
In the library program, the help choices must be used in the right quantity and for each field independently			
Estimating the likelihood that the program structure will be modified to meet the requirements of each library.			
The RDA Iraq adaptation table can be used with the library software.			
It should be considered to modify the library software's search and resource retrieval structure in accordance with the new RDA rules.			
Q4: What are the primary challenges—technical, institutional, and human—that librarians face when implementing RDA?			

Communication issues with library patrons			
Communication issues inside the library			
Insufficient knowledge and information to implement data compatibility.			
Issues using the new library software.			
Absence of the primary trustee (to enforce RDA regulations)			

Section Two: General Information

Gender:

- Male ☐
- Female ☐

Number of years of experience working in the library:

- Less than 5 years ☐
- 5 to 10 years ☐
- 10 to 15 years ☐
- More than 15 years ☐

Job role:

- Cataloging Staff ☐
- Technical Staff ☐
- Supervisor or Manager ☐