

**To:** Amanda Ros, Chair  
ALA/ALCTS/CaMMS Committee on Cataloging: Description and Access

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**Subject:** Proposal to add the elements "curator agent of work" and "curator agent of work of" to RDA

### Abstract

Add the agent element sets "curator agent of work" and "curator agent of work of" to RDA to describe curators who play a role at the work level. Modify the labels and definitions of the element sets "curator agent" and "curator agent of" to clearly distinguish curators who play a role at the item level from those who play a role at the work level.

### Background

- The RDA Toolkit includes the element "curator agent" defined as "An agent who conceives or manages the aggregation of an item in an exhibition or collection." While there is a need for an element curator as an item to agent relationship (for instance, for special collections), the art community believes that being able to show a relationship between curators that have relationships to works in addition to those who have relationships to items is crucial.
- Curators' roles have recently been defined as follows: "to conceive, select and organize presentations of their chosen material in order to provide access to the visiting public." (Adrian George, "Introduction" in *The Curator's Handbook*, Thames and Hudson, 2015, page 8). Any "work" that comes out of an exhibition is dependent on the curator's intellectual contributions. The relationship is not between an agent and an item but between an agent and the work that is published as a result of an exhibition (most commonly, the exhibition catalog). For this reason, the art community believes that a new element should be added to RDA to relate curators to the work to which the exhibition gives rise.
- The "organizer agent" is a shortcut—the agent's responsibility is for an event that "gives rise to a work," but the event itself is not a work. The exhibition curator proposal takes the same shortcut, i.e., it does not entail defining the exhibition event as a work.
- It has been suggested that art catalogers use the element "organizer agent," which does have a domain of "work," to describe this sort of relationship. However, these two terms are not equivalent. While exhibitions may have an "organizer," who manages the

logistics of transporting pieces, etc., the curator is recognized as playing a different role by the art community. The curator is the person who determines themes, interprets material, and accordingly selects objects to be put on display; they thus have an impact on what works are reproduced in the catalog, the themes that are analyzed in the textual content of the catalog, etc.

- Using the term editor agent of text to describe the relationship between the exhibition curator and the catalog is not adequate since the exhibition curator is not always the agent who edits the catalog.
- The element “collector agent” cannot be used to describe an exhibition curator since it shows a relationship between an item and an agent and not all exhibition curators are collectors.
- The element “collection registrar agent,” which is defined as “An agent who is a curator who lists or inventories items in a collection aggregate” cannot be used to describe the curator of an exhibition since it shows a relationship between an item and an agent and does not involve conceiving, selecting, and organizing the exhibition or collection for presentation.
- Some languages use different terms for curators who play a role at the item level from those who play a role at the work level. In French, for instance the curator of an item is a “conservateur,” while the curator of an exhibition is a “commissaire d’exposition.”
- Using the curator in bibliographic records describing exhibition catalogs is already common practice in OCLC demonstrating the need of the art community to accurately describe the relationship between a curator of an exhibition and the work it gave rise to.
- The fact that agents may have relationships with different resource entities is well documented within RDA. For example, RDA has an element for restorationist agent of expression and restorationist agent of item. Therefore, we believe that something similar could be done for curators while still following RDA principles.

## Recommendation

- Create new element labels, definitions, and instructions for “curator agent of work” and “curator agent of work of” to describe curators whose role are restricted to “curation” and “exhibition” or “collection” at the work level. The labels follow the models of the elements “related agent of work” and “related agent of work of,” and the definitions follow the model of the definitions for “organizer agent” and “organizer agent of.”
- Add the narrower agent elements:
  - curator collective agent of work
  - curator corporate body of work
  - curator family of work
  - curator person of work
  - curator collective agent of work of
  - curator corporate body of work of

- curator family of work of
  - curator person of work of
- Modify the labels and definitions of the element sets “curator agent” to “curator agent of item,” and “curator agent of” to “curator agent of item of” to distinguish these elements that describe relationships between items and agents from the new curator elements proposed to describe relationships between works and agent. The following elements will need to be modified:
  - curator agent
  - curator collective agent
  - curator corporate body
  - curator family
  - curator person
  - curator agent of
  - curator collective agent of
  - curator corporate body of
  - curator family of
  - curator person of

## Proposal

# curator agent of work

## Definition and Scope

An agent who conceives, selects, and organizes a presentation of materials from a collection or displayed in an exhibition that gives rise to a work.

## Element Reference

Domain

**Work**

Range

**Agent**

Alternate labels

has curator agent of work

curator of work

## Prerecording

## Recording

Record this element as a value of Agent: **appellation of agent** or as an IRI.

## Recording an unstructured description

Record an unstructured description for a related agent as a value of Agent: **name of agent**.

For general guidance on unstructured descriptions, see Recording methods. [Recording an unstructured description](#).

### Recording a structured description

Record a structured description for a related agent as a value of Agent: [access point for agent](#).

For general guidance on structured descriptions, see Recording methods. [Recording a structured description](#).

### Recording an identifier

Record an identifier for a related agent as a value of Agent: [identifier for agent](#).

For general guidance on identifiers, see Recording methods. [Recording an identifier](#).

### Recording an IRI

Record an IRI for a related agent as a real-world object.

For general guidance on IRIs, see Recording methods: [Recording an IRI](#).

### Related Elements

For broader elements, see Work: [related agent of work](#).

For the inverse of this element, see Agent: [curator agent of work of](#).

# curator agent of work of

## Definition and Scope

A work that involves a responsibility of an agent for conceiving, selecting and organizing a presentation of materials from a collection or displayed in an exhibition that gives rise to a work.

## Element Reference

Domain

**Agent**

Range

**Work**

Alternate labels

is curator agent of work of

curator of work of

## Prerecording

### Recording

Record this element as a value of Work: **appellation of work** or as an IRI.

### Recording an unstructured description

Record an unstructured description for a related work as a value of Work: **title of work**.

For general guidance on unstructured descriptions, see Recording methods. **Recording an unstructured description**.

### Recording a structured description

Record a structured description for a related work as a value of Work: [access point for work](#).

For general guidance on structured descriptions, see Recording methods. [Recording a structured description](#).

### Recording an identifier

Record an identifier for a related work as a value of Work: [identifier for work](#).

For general guidance on identifiers, see Recording methods. [Recording an identifier](#).

### Recording an IRI

Record an IRI for a related work as a real-world object.

For general guidance on IRIs, see Recording methods: [Recording an IRI](#).

### Related Elements

For broader elements, see Agent: [related work of agent](#).

For the inverse of this element, see Work: [curator agent of work](#).

Make the following change to element labels

## curator agent of item

### Definition and Scope

An agent who ~~conceives or manages, administers, or organizes the inclusion~~ the aggregation of an item in a collection or an exhibition ~~or collection~~.

#### Element Reference

#### Alternate labels

has curator agent of item

curator of item

## curator agent of item of

### Definition and Scope

An item that involves a responsibility of an agent for ~~conceiving or managing, administering, or organizing the inclusion~~ the aggregation of an item in a collection or an exhibition ~~or collection~~.

#### Element Reference

#### Alternate labels

is curator agent of item of

curator of item of



Clean text

## curator agent of item

### Definition and Scope

An item that involves a responsibility of an agent for managing, administering, or organizing the inclusion of an item in a collection or an exhibition-

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### Element Reference

#### Alternate labels

has curator agent of item

curator of item

## curator agent of item of

### Definition and Scope

An item that involves a responsibility of an agent for managing, administering, or organizing the inclusion of an item in a collection or an exhibition.

### Element Reference

#### Alternate labels

is curator agent of item of

curator of item of