

Openers

by Beth DeFrancis Sun

As a reference librarian with very little cataloging experience, I found the two-day workshop I recently attended titled “RDA from Scratch for Catalogers” to be a bit of a stretch. I was the only non-cataloger in the hands-on classroom, and I wasn’t certain I’d be able to keep up. Fortunately, the instructor, Shana McDanold, was masterful in explaining Resource Description and Access (RDA), now replacing AACR2 (Anglo-American Cataloging Rules, 2nd Ed.), in plain language. In fact, she explained how I actually had an advantage since I didn’t have to un-learn the MARC (Machine-Readable Cataloging) field standards. It helped, too, that the woman sitting right next to me—an experienced cataloger from the Dumbarton Oaks Research Library who gets to spend her time working with garden books—let me look over her shoulder while she practiced applying the new RDA standards. She then insisted that I try it on my own,

walking me through the process and then checking my work. I sure picked the right seat!

Why had I signed up for this hands-on cataloging class since I spend most of my time on the reference desk? Looking back, I sup-

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pose the answer is threefold: (1) I got to escape the physical confines of my day-to-day work environment; (2) I got to exercise a different cluster of brain cells; and (3) I gained insights into the new way that information is being tagged, packaged, and made accessible in what is increasingly becoming a worldwide warehouse. Were it not for the knowledge that we librarians have as to how (and where) information is stored, our patrons might only have access to a small

fraction of the world’s bibliographic treasures. Which is where *stretching* beyond the comfort of our own work routines could actually open up the universe that Virginia library lovers reside in.

The Virginia Library Association (VLA) gives all of its members—whether you’re a cataloger, reference librarian, information associate, library advocate, vendor, volunteer, and/or library patron—a chance to stay current on what’s taking place in today’s libraries. Whether you’re interested in evolving cataloging standards, innovative events planning (check out “We Put On a Comic-Con,” page 21), collection development (see “Circulating Romance,” page 31), or conference participation (see the 2013 VLA Paraprofessional Forum conference coverage, beginning on page 5), there’s something here for everyone who is affiliated with Virginia’s extraordinary collection of libraries. Happy reading! **VI**

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The screenshot shows the Virginia Library Association website. At the top left is the logo with the text "VIRGINIA LIBRARY ASSOCIATION". Below the logo is a navigation menu with "Categories" and "Archives" sections, each with a "Select" dropdown. The main content area features a large banner for "2013 VLA Vendor Registration NOW OPEN!" dated April 9th, 2013. To the right of the banner are links for "RSS Subscribe" and "VLA Calendar". At the top right of the page, there are links for "Posts" and "Comments".