My charge for this talk is to address and speculate about the effect of the new cataloging code, RDA, on libraries, archives, and museums, (or LAMs).

This presentation was delivered at the 2012 Art Libraries Society of North America Annual Conference, held in Toronto, Canada, as part of a session entitled Metadata: The Changing Information Landscape.
For the purposes of this talk I’m assuming that you have some familiarity with cataloging practices, AACR2 and the transition to RDA as well as the FRBR concepts.

FRBR is a conceptual model of the bibliographic universe that relates user tasks of retrieval and access to the elements and relationships of resource description, or cataloging, most commonly found in library catalog and database records.
RDA, Resource Description and Access, is the successor to AACR2 and has a philosophical foundation in FRBR. It’s a content standard that provides guidelines and instructions on formulating data to support resource discovery—for recording attributes of and relationships between entities and resources.

It’s important to keep in mind that RDA is not an encoding or data transmission scheme, like MARC, or a display scheme, like much of ISBD. It’s about creating well-formed data that you would then enter into whatever encoding scheme you choose.
The RDA instructions are not finished. The chapters on most FRBR Group 3 entities: concepts, objects, and events—have yet to be constructed.
Here’s where we are right now with RDA:
The Library of Congress announced in late February that the target date for Day One of RDA Implementation will be March 31, 2013. Day One is the date when all catalog records newly created at LC will be produced according to RDA instructions.

Other national libraries—the ones listed here--are targeting the first quarter of 2013 for their RDA implementation.

The Program of Cooperative Cataloging has not set a date for Day One of Authority Records, but they have stated that the Authorities Day One will be harmonized with LC's Day One “as much as possible”.

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<td>Deutsche Nationalbibliothek (mid-2013)</td>
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LC has published a Long Range RDA Training Plan to make sure that all affected LC staff will be prepared with sufficient knowledge and skills for RDA Day One. If you're planning to implement, review the training plan now to see how they're attacking the issues.

RDA records have been created for months now by a few libraries that have already implemented RDA, like the University of Chicago, Stanford University and the Clark Art Institute.

Stanford is currently maintaining openly accessible documentation on their procedures and decisions, available here: http://lib.stanford.edu/metadata-department/rda-testing
I’m here to discuss how RDA and its implementation will impact libraries, archives and museums. This chart is from the Indiana University Libraries and is a visualization of how 105 different metadata standards apply to four groups of categories.

In each category “wedge,” the standards listed closest to the center are those most strongly connected to that category. I’m going to focus on the “community” categories of libraries, archives and museums, and you’ll be seeing details of those categories as we progress.

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It is difficult to imagine that RDA will gain traction in the Museum community: there are practices seemingly established beyond the potential for change—for example, names in direct order—and often, librarians wield less influence because of how institutional power is structured.

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For example, in my own institution, object cataloging guidelines were locally developed in consultation with a very large committee including only one librarian (who is not a cataloger). These guidelines make very little reference to external established standards or controlled vocabularies.

Our museum catalogers (in curatorial departments, that is, not the library) were for many years allowed to form data and describe objects in whatever way they wished and according to the practices of their given discipline. But we can’t fault medievalists for wanting to describe their objects by using vocabularies and input conventions used by other medievalists.

And the Metropolitan Museum's efforts towards integrating all 26 curatorial object databases and aligning 26 cataloging conventions is a herculean task in itself, so how can we expect that after this integration happens--which has been very painful for some--that curators would be willing to absorb another round of changes?
In the case of archives, there should be some effect on archival cataloging due to authorities changes. The main archival cataloging manuals: Describing Archives, a Content Standard; Graphic Materials; and Archival Moving Image Materials--mirror the structure of and take much of their content from AACR2, or require concurrent use of AACR2 to formulate headings for their records.

So archivists have a history with AACR2, but the real question is when--or whether, or how--archivists’ cataloging manuals will make a transition to RDA.
I predict that changes from AACR2 to RDA will take place slowly in the archives world, especially considering that RDA is not yet complete. It’s highly unlikely that RDA would ever completely replace any of the instructions I just mentioned, but there is a decent chance that RDA instructions for headings will supersede the AACR2 ones worked into those manuals.
Our best immediate path may be to further develop MARC or some other encoding scheme in a way that would conform to museum, archive AND library cataloging practices and goals.

Taking the example of name displays, if name authorities were further broken into very specific elements: forename, surname, middle name, date of birth, date of death, etc., then machines could manage the displays of those names so the libraries could get last-first and museums could get direct order on the appropriate pages—and the input conventions and cataloger interfaces could be the same for everyone.
Relationship designators—the terms following a contributor’s name to establish the role that contributor played in the described resource—is a place where museum, archive, and library cataloging share common ground. This is one (extreme) example from the Metropolitan Museum’s web site.

For both Museums and Archives, it’s most likely that RDA will be adopted in smaller and more nimble institutions that may have an enthusiastic staff member willing to learn the new instruction set and fully implement it. Still, I’d guess that an implementation of or change to RDA conventions would be triggered by some sort of database migration or staffing change, as well as the presence of an influential librarian to promote RDA as a potential answer for that particular situation.

http://www.metmuseum.org/Collections/search-the-collections/90002022
RDA was designed for use primarily in libraries. There is continuity with AACR2—as of September 2011 per LTI, an automated authorities control vendor, fewer than 600 name authority records out of the 12,000 created using RDA rules have different RDA and AACR2 forms…

http://www.authoritycontrol.com/RDA110907
...and those records are in turn a tiny subset of the 8 million name authorities already in the national database. That’s less than 5% of the names so far created using RDA and .0075% of the entire file!

You don’t have to implement RDA if you don’t want to and at the outset there won’t be much difference. But will the pain of not implementing RDA increase over time, and can a library simply take whatever records come in and live with a combination of content standards? To a great extent, we already do—even the most diligent of libraries have some mixture of records that adhere to different cataloging rules.
Beyond the ‘choice’ question, at first libraries will have to adjust their current systems to handle new MARC fields, subfields and indicators and display them appropriately. Catalogers, if transitioning to the new standard, will have to learn the content of RDA as well as the online reference, the RDA Toolkit.

For implementing libraries, absorbing the training costs is a given, but more important will be the mental and philosophical shift RDA requires.

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Art cataloging is getting interesting. LC has already published a guide to cataloging “art catalogs”—what they define as exhibition catalogs and “listings of artwork by one or more artists, usually with many pictures” and NOT including auction catalogs, artists' books or “other types of books about art.” This special topics slideshow…

http://www.loc.gov/aba/rda/source/special_topics_art_catalogs.ppt
...and this flowchart are a good introduction to the descriptive issues involved. After establishing the preferred title, the next question in RDA really is, “who is the creator of the resource?” Beyond that and outside physical description, everything is some form of access point.

But how LC frames the choices within this flowchart is outdated, because they are still using the AACR vocabulary of main and added entries. We have to stop thinking of the concept of main entry when constructing RDA records. This mental model is a legacy of the card catalog era and is essentially meaningless in the online world, where everything is searchable and where, for machines, there is no difference between a main or added entry, or a MARC 1xx or 7xx.

http://www.loc.gov/aba/rda/source/special_topics_art_catalogs_flowchart.doc
Right now, for art catalogs we’ll go first to RDA 19.2.1.1.1, and its Library of Congress Policy Statement for Art catalogs, for guidance on when to enter corporate bodies as creators. If a catalog doesn’t meet the conditions in this rule, the situation gets a bit trickier.
The simple answer for many catalogs in AACR2, 21.17B1—instructing you to use a main entry for the author of the text or for the artist, is not explicitly stated in RDA. So, we have to go to RDA Chapter 6 to figure out how to construct the appropriate access points, and it will usually be one of these sections.

AACR2 21.17B1, now:

6.27.1.2 Works Created by One Person
6.27.1.3 Collaborative Works
6.27.1.4 Compilations
6.27.1.6 Commentary, etc. Added to a Previously Existing Work
One development we should monitor closely is that of the authorized access point and "conventional collective title."

Catalogs that are presented as a compilation of the work of an artist with “commentary” might have what are called conventional collective titles--aka uniform titles--or analytical access points, expressed in the form: “Works. Selections. [Date of publication].” The restrictions against these in AACR2 have been eliminated in RDA and they align with the FRBR principles, but it remains to be seen how they will be applied on a large scale in art library catalogs—it is easy to foresee a mass proliferation of these titles, since so many catalogs are a selection of artists' works with accompanying text.
At a certain point we pass the point of utility...and arrive at a point of futility, like this list of conventional collective titles that would be in the records for the 710 catalogs in the Metropolitan Museum Libraries with a Picasso--Exhibitions subject heading.

Having 21 of them for 2001, while an extreme example, calls into question the use of this type of title.
The effect of RDA on our users remains to be seen: at this point the elimination of “confusing” abbreviations will make a cosmetic difference and will help clear up confusion about Latin abbreviations like s.n. or s.l. for publication information.
### Relationship Designators

- **Gober, Robert, 1954-**
- **Gober, Robert, 1954-, artist**
- **Gober, Robert, 1954-, artist, author**
- **Gober, Robert, 1954-, artist, interviewee**
- **Gober, Robert, 1954-, curator**
- **Gober, Robert, 1954-, writer of added text**

- National Gallery of Art (U.S.), current owner
- National Gallery of Art (U.S.), former owner
- National Gallery of Art (U.S.), host institution
- National Gallery of Art (U.S.), host institution, issuing body
- National Gallery of Art (U.S.), issuing body

Having a greater immediate impact for some libraries is the appearance of split search results due to the presence of relationship designators in the name entries. This is problematic because preexisting records in these databases won't have assigned relationship designators, so you'll have a limited universe of works where you can tell that a contributor played a particular role. Right next to those headings, all the legacy (and non-RDA) records will be gathered into one big undifferentiated group. The use of relationship designators isn't required in RDA, but it's certain that we'll be seeing them in records. Long-term, they will be incredibly useful in better search, limit, facet, combine, and link functionalities in our catalogs or databases or whatever web-based tools we end up using to serve our constituencies.

RDA is satisfied with providing general instructions and letting individual catalogers and/or communities of catalogers work out the details. This means that specialized cataloging communities are going to be expected to shoulder more of the burden for developing discipline-specific practices (e.g. workflows). This is where ARLIS/NA can take action and do something as an organization.
The ALA Committee on Cataloging: Description and Access is responsible for submitting RDA revision proposals on behalf of the American Library Association and formulating ALA responses to revision proposals from other bodies. Because we have a seat at the CC:DA table through the ARLIS/NA liaison, we have a direct line into the instructions revision process.

We also have the power to bring our own proposals to the committee for consideration, and that’s something we may want to accomplish in the near future.

http://alcts.ala.org/ccda/roster.html
The ARLIS/NA Cataloging Advisory Committee can and should play a significant role as well: over the next year, perhaps CAC will create ARLIS/NA Workflows for cataloging common resources in RDA, e.g. exhibition catalogs, catalogues raisonne or artists’ books. And I understand that LC would appreciate our expertise in dealing with art cataloging issues.

http://www.arlisna.org/organization/com/catadv/index.html
A great deal of impact might be generated by Art Name Authority Cooperative contributors, or Art NACO. Authorities catalogers, using RDA, now have the opportunity to include a lot of the research that goes into establishing a name authority directly in the authority record. And as I’ve already stated, there is a lot of potential for progress with the museum and archive communities in the realm of authorized names.
There are four elements that helped libraries build their catalogs: Instructions for well-formed data entry; a Format for encoding that data; Systems that can display that encoded format and index its content; and a Communication protocol that allows sharing of data and/or records. With RDA, we are developing and implementing the first of these without having a comparable version of the other three legs of the table in place to support it. In this sense we’re practicing faith-based cataloging, and we have to hope that the other pieces of the equation follow soon.

The potential advantages are huge: More reuse of batch- or vendor-created data by us, and of our data by other communities; harmonies of names across resources; more opportunities to make adjustments and enhancements to data for local purposes; and more machine-actionable data, lessening the work we and our users will have to do to retrieve appropriate resources. Well-formed data is a vital piece of the infrastructure to support search and display, whether that data is in a library catalog or on the web--and the idea is that eventually there won’t be any difference between the two.
Libraries have a long history of adopting standards because we needed to communicate our data for copy cataloging and inter-library loan among other things.

Museums tend to pay lip service to standards but haven’t—until recently—recognized the value of standardized data because there has always been focus on the uniqueness of their holdings and a reluctance on the part of art historians to admit that their individual disciplines might benefit from sharing data with others.

Archives land somewhere in the middle since there are strong relationships with libraries and librarians.

RDA’s effect will be cosmetic on the descriptive level with the abbreviation changes and such, but the real potential we have to fulfill is in the areas of name and subject access points and authority records. A clear and appropriately granular instruction set could go a long way in making our data as interoperable and flexible as possible. It’s really important for us to mentally jettison the concept of main and added entries in favor of thinking about a resource’s creator and its access points.

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Here is a link to a brief bibliography of some basic introductory materials to read and strategize with over the next year as Day One approaches; it will arrive whether we’re ready or not, and whether we want to take part or not.

Thank you for your attention.

Dan Lipcan
The Metropolitan Museum of Art
dan.lipcan@metmuseum.org

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I also owe a great debt of gratitude to my wife, Elaine, for her advice and support.

I couldn’t have put this together without the collective thinking and support of all these people.