

TO: Peter J. Rolla, Chair
ALA/ALCTS/CaMMS/Committee on Cataloging: Description and Access (CC:DA)

FROM: John Attig, JSC Representative

SUBJECT: Colour Content (RDA 7.17)

Background

The treatment of Colour Content (RDA 7.17) has recently been discussed in two contexts. First, Deborah Fritz in her discussion paper [CC:DA/Fritz/2013/1] pointed out the inconsistency, in particular, of recording “black and white” for still images (7.17.2.3) and for moving images (7.17.3.3), but not for illustrative content (7.17.1.3). Further, illustrative content frequently consists of still images, and it is disconcerting that you get different results depending on whether you apply 7.17.2.3 or 7.17.1.3 when describing black-and-white illustrations. Deborah noted that the British Library has chosen to apply 7.17.2.3 in describing the colour content of illustrations.

Coincidentally, the Joint Steering Committee has been discussing the vocabularies associated with the Colour Content element. They have expressed a preference for a single set of terms that would be used in describing colour content for any resource, and question whether there should be distinct element subtypes for Colour of Still Image, etc.

In order to move these discussions forward, Deborah Fritz, Kathy Glennan and I drafted a possible revision proposal, that would accomplish two things: (a) give a consistent set of terms that would be used in describing colour content in any context; and (b) provide a single set of instructions that would be applied for describing the colour content of resources such as still or moving images, as well as the colour content of illustrations. This proposal was discussed by CC:DA during the ALA Annual Conference in June 2013, and has been revised in the light of those discussions.

Discussion

1. Vocabulary issues. The published text of RDA included no controlled terms for Colour Content. This was revised from an earlier draft because ALA (in particular) was unwilling to agree to spell “color” with a “u” as RDA editorial policy required. The JSC agreed that no term (or spelling) would be specified for this element. They also agreed to provide examples that illustrated both spellings.

A further issue arises because of the separate instructions (deriving ultimately from rules in different chapters of AACR2) for recording the colour of moving images, still images, and three-dimensional forms. This results in the situation noted above, in which “black and white” is indicated for still and moving images, but not for illustrations.

ALA recommends that there be a single vocabulary and a single set of instructions for recording the colour content of all resources. Proposal #3 below is a list of terms and definitions to be added to the RDA Glossary.

2. Vocabulary vs. instructions. RDA 7.17 currently provides a set of instructions for recording certain terms; it does not define a controlled vocabulary. ALA is uncertain whether a controlled vocabulary here is appropriate, primarily because such a vocabulary can only be partial, due to the instruction to record the names of specific colours if considered important. Therefore, we have presented two options. Option 1 continues to present instructions for recording particular terms under given circumstances. Option 2 instructs the cataloguer to “record one or more appropriate terms from the following list:” and gives a list of terms. At this time, ALA does not have a preference between these two options.

3. Tinted and toned. ALA believes that tinting and toning should be considered as refinements of the term “black and white”. We have investigated the phenomenon. Although there are broader definitions of tinting and toning, the use in Anglo-American cataloging has always been limited to the process by which black-and-white film (both photographic and motion-picture film) is chemically altered to produce colour. The tinting process colours the film base, while the toning process colours the film emulsion (leaving the “clear” portions unaffected). The definitions proposed below attempt to capture this.

In the light of this limitation to black and white film stock, we believe that “tinted” and “toned” should not be defined as independent terms, but should be considered as refinements of the term “black and white”. We have therefore proposed three terms for this purpose:

black and white (tinted)

black and white (tinted and toned)

black and white (toned)

However, the discussion above suggests to us that something strange is going on here. A black and white image that has been tinted is no longer black and white. If we are attempting to describe its colour content, then describing it as “black and white” seems inappropriate and misleading. Further, tinting and toning are not colours; they are chemical processes that alter the colour of the image. Therefore, it has been suggested that tinting and toning really belong under the RDA element Production Method (RDA 3.9). That element, however, has been defined as the production process used to produce the resource; in this case, tinting and toning are the processes used to produce (or rather, to alter) the colour content. The only way to add tinting and toning to Production Method would seem to be to add another special category (3.9.4) for Production Method for Tinted and/or Toned Images. ALA is not ready to recommend this solution. The proposals below retain tinting and toning as refinements of “black and white”. We suggest that the JSC discuss whether this information more properly belongs in Production Method.

4. Sepia. We note in passing that *sepia* is actually a type of toning. Given the long history of singling out this category, we have retained it.

5. Grey scale. We considered whether grey scale should be limited to digital images. Our investigations showed that this is indeed a method of rendering a black and white digital image using pixels that differ only in intensity, not in hue. We recommend that this exception be retained.

6. **Colour vs color.** We believe that this sort of variant spelling can be controlled by systems, and therefore do not oppose using the preferred spelling. However, we have suggested the inclusion of “[or *color*]” at several points to underscore that this is a legitimate variant.
 7. **Definition of “colour”.** There was no definition of “colour” in RDA or in the Registry. The one included here was suggested to ALA by Thurston Young of the British Library. We propose it for discussion, while noting that it seems to rely on understanding that black and white are not *primary* colours.
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Revision Proposals

Note: Proposals #1 and #2 are designed to replace the entire text of RDA 7.17. In other words, the current 7.17.2–7.17.5 are to be deleted. Because these represent eclectic texts based on various current instructions, no mark-up is shown.

1. RDA 7.17 – Option 1:

7.17 Colour Content

7.17.1 Basic Instructions on Recording Colour Content

7.17.1.1 Scope

Colour content is the presence of colour, tone, etc., in the content of a resource.

Colour content is also the specific colours, tones, etc., (including black and white) present in the content of a resource.

Colour content does not include matter outside the actual content of the resource (e.g., the border of a map, the cover of a book).

For instructions on recording information on item-specific hand colouring, see [3.21](#).

For instructions on recording the broadcast standard used for colour in videos, see [3.18.3](#).

7.17.1.2 Sources of Information

Use evidence presented by the resource itself as the basis for recording the presence of colour content in the resource. If desired, take additional evidence from any source.

7.17.1.3 Recording Colour Content

Apply these instructions to describe the colour content of:

- a) the resource itself

or

- b) the content of the resource, including illustrative content (see [7.15](#)).

Record details of colour content as instructed under [7.17.1.4](#).

7.17.1.3.1 Black and White

If the resource or its content is in black and white or shades of grey, record *black and white*.

EXAMPLE

black and white

A motion picture film in black and white

Exception

Digital still images. For digital still images in grey scale, record *grey scale*.

7.17.1.3.2 Tinted and Toned Images

If the image or images in black and white are tinted and/or toned, specify *tinted*, *toned*, or *tinted and toned* as appropriate, in parentheses, following *black and white*. If considered important for identification or selection, record the details as instructed under [7.17.1.4](#).

EXAMPLE

black and white (tinted)

A photograph in black and white, tinted blue

black and white (tinted)

A motion picture film in black and white, tinted yellow

black and white (tinted and toned)

A motion picture film in black and white, tinted yellow and toned green

If the images contained in the resource are in sepia, record *sepia*.

EXAMPLE

sepia

A photograph in sepia

7.17.1.3.3 Colour

If the resource or its content is in colour, record *colour* [or *color*].

EXAMPLE

colour

A set of slides in colour

Alternative

If the specific colours are considered to be important for identification or selection, name the colour or colours instead of recording *colour* [or *color*].

EXAMPLE

blue
red

An oil painting

blue
white

A porcelain bowl with blue figures on a white background

7.17.1.3.4 Combination of Colour and Black and White

If the resource or its content is in a combination of colour and black and white, record both *colour* [or *color*] and *black and white*. If considered to be important for identification or selection, record the details as instructed under [7.17.1.4](#).

EXAMPLE

colour
black and white

7.17.1.3.5 Foreground and Background

If the foreground and background in a resource designed for persons with visual impairments are other than black on white, record the colours of the foreground and background. Otherwise, ignore the colour of textual content.

EXAMPLE

blue text on yellow background

7.17.1.4 Details of Colour Content

Record details of the colour content if they are considered important for identification or selection.

EXAMPLE

Colour maps, black-and-white photographs

Illustration which include colour maps and black-and-white photographs. Colour content recorded as: colour, black and white

Some color

10 maps, some of which are in colour

Chiefly colour

Illustrations, most of which are in colour

2 maps in colour

Resource containing 4 maps, 2 of which are in colour

Color with black and white sequences

A motion picture film

Black and white with colour introductory sequence

A motion picture film

Title and headings printed in red
An early printed resource
Displays in red, yellow, and blue
Technicolor
Colourized

2. RDA 7.17 – Option 2:

7.17 Colour Content

7.17.1 Basic Instructions on Recording Colour Content

7.17.1.1 Scope

Colour content is the presence of colour, tone, etc., in the content of a resource.

Colour content is also the specific colours, tones, etc., (including black and white) present in the content of a resource.

Colour content does not include matter outside the actual content of the resource (e.g., the border of a map, the cover of a book).

For instructions on recording information on item-specific hand colouring, see [3.21](#).

For instructions on recording the broadcast standard used for colour in videos, see [3.18.3](#).

7.17.1.2 Sources of Information

Use evidence presented by the resource itself as the basis for recording the presence of colour content in the resource. If desired, take additional evidence from any source.

7.17.1.3 Recording Colour Content

Apply these instructions to describe the colour content of:

- a) the resource itself

or

- b) the content of the resource, including illustrative content (see [7.15](#)).

Record the colour content by using one or more appropriate terms from the following list:

black and white
black and white (tinted)
black and white (tinted and toned)
black and white (toned)
colour [*or* color]
sepia

EXAMPLE

black and white

A motion picture film in black and white

black and white (tinted)

A photograph in black and white, tinted

black and white (tinted)

A set of slides in colour

sepia

A photograph in sepia

Exception

Digital still images. For digital still images in grey scale, record *grey scale*.

If the image or images in black and white are tinted and/or toned, specify *tinted*, *toned*, or *tinted and toned* as appropriate, in parentheses, following *black and white*. If considered important for identification or selection, record the details as instructed under [7.17.1.4](#).

EXAMPLE

black and white (tinted)

A set of slides in colour

black and white (tinted)

A motion picture film in black and white, tinted yellow

black and white (tinted and toned)

A motion picture film in black and white, tinted yellow and toned green

Alternative

If the specific colours are considered to be important for identification or selection, name the colour or colours instead of recording *colour* [or *color*].

EXAMPLE

blue

red

An oil painting

blue

white

A porcelain bowl with blue figures on a white background

If the foreground and background in a resource designed for persons with visual impairments are other than black on white, record the colours of the foreground and background. Otherwise, ignore the colour of textual content.

EXAMPLE

blue text on yellow background

Record details of colour content as instructed under [7.17.1.4](#).

7.17.1.4 Details of Colour Content

Record details of the colour content if they are considered important for identification or selection.

EXAMPLE

Colour maps, black-and-white photographs

Illustration which include colour maps and black-and-white photographs. Colour content recorded as: colour, black and white

Some color

10 maps, some of which are in colour

Chiefly colour

Illustrations, most of which are in colour

2 maps in colour

Resource containing 4 maps, 2 of which are in colour

Color with black and white sequences

A motion picture film

Black and white with colour introductory sequence

A motion picture film

Title and headings printed in red

An early printed resource

Displays in red, yellow, and blue

Technicolor

Colourized

3. RDA Glossary:

Add:

- | | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| black and white | Colour content consisting of shades of black and white. |
| black and white (tinted) | Colour content of previously black and white film produced by a chemical alteration of the film base to get a dominant hue that affects the entire surface of the film. |
| black and white (tinted and toned) | Colour content that adds colour to black and white film by using a tinted base and a toned emulsion. |
| black and white (toned) | Colour content of previously black and white film produced by a chemical alteration of the film emulsion that affects the silver image of the positive film, but leaves the clear portions unaffected. |

colour	Colour content consisting entirely or in part of primary colour, or colour derived from primary colour.
grey scale	Colour content of a digital image consisting of pixels that differ only in intensity, varying in stages from black to white.
sepia	Colour content consisting of a cool brownish colour with overtones of violet or olive colour, varying from light to moderate value.

Questions for CC:DA:

- 1. Proposal or Discussion Paper:** If this goes forward, should it be as a proposal or as a discussion paper?
- 2. Vocabulary:** Two options are given. Option 1 continues to present a set of instructions. Option 2 defines a vocabulary. I recommend submitting both options to the JSC. Does CC:DA agree? In either case, I have added proposals to add the terms to the Glossary.
- 3. Tinted and toned as colour content:** Is there agreement to the narrow definition given here? Is there any interest in expanding the definition?
- 4. Tinted and toned as production method:** It was suggested that this is really a production method — something done to a black-and-white image, rather than the identification of the colour content of the resource. I do not see any easy way to add this to RDA 3.9 (Production Method) other than to add a separate section (3.9.4) for Production Method for Tinted and/or Toned Images. I would prefer to leave it in Colour Content, as it has always been associated with that element, but to raise the issue for JSC discussion. Do you agree?
- 5. Grey scale:** Do we agree to retain this with the limitation to digital images?
- 6. Text and background:** I generalized to “foreground and background of a resource intended for persons with visual impairments”. Should this be generalized further by removing “for a resource intended for persons with visual impairments”?