

## Remodeling RAMEAU indexing language

RAMEAU (an acronym for *Répertoire d'autorité-matière encyclopédique et alphabétique unifié*) is used in France as an indexing language to describe the subject matter of books and other items in the catalogs of the French National Library, University libraries, some public and research libraries and a few private organizations as well.

It was developed in 1980 from the RVM Laval (*Répertoire des vedettes matières de l'Université Laval (Québec)*) and the Library of Congress Subject Headings, and has evolved independently thanks to new terms proposed by its network of users (about 300 organizations in France, Belgium and Switzerland).

RAMEAU is a precoordinated language consisting of a vocabulary and a syntax (its rules for indexers are given in the [Guide d'indexation RAMEAU](#)).

Presently, 30 years after it was created, the RAMEAU language is facing new challenges: the changing needs of the community of its users, the export of data beyond library catalogs, linked data and semantic web technologies.

A French National Working Group (GTN), set up in 2016, has produced recommendations in a 2017 [Final report](#). The report has been endorsed by the RAMEAU Policy Committee (*Comité d'orientation RAMEAU*) and the RAMEAU operational Committee (*Comité opérationnel RAMEAU*).

Those recommendations can be summarized as follows:

- Syntactic building rules must be simplified and rules specific to particular fields of knowledge should be eliminated to make it easier for librarians and users to use RAMEAU.
- The encoding of RAMEAU entities must be more refined so as to allow for separate vocabularies such as : Topic (what the item is about), Genre and form (what the item is : format and purpose of the document), Place names, Events and Time span. These entities will be potentially linked together. For example, a date can be linked to a physical person authority or/and with a topical authority (subject).

RAMEAU is already very rich from a semantic point of view. It must become more easily exploitable and reusable by humans or by machines (especially by the new Discovery tools where facets and word combinations are suggested in the searching interface). RAMEAU will be more intuitive both in indexing and searching.

We should note that other foreign libraries (for instance: LC, Germany, Poland) are addressing the same issues and developing new solutions close to the present RAMEAU recommendations.

Moreover, those recommendations conform with the IFLA-LRM model (where Place names and Time are viewed as Entities and not as Attributes), and fit in the [French national Bibliographic Transition program](#) and RDA cataloging rules in France. Eventually, the different vocabularies are

meant to be part of the French National File of Entities (*Fichier National d' Entités*, which is at the step of a feasibility study).

All in all, RAMEAU will no longer be based on a precoordinated syntax with strings: it will consist of linked entities.

A 5- year road map was approved by the RAMEAU policy committee on June 2017.

The French National Group (GTN) has joined the Standardization Group (*groupe Normalisation*) of the Bibliographic Transition National Program in France as a sub-group devoted to “Concepts, Places and Time”. This “Concepts, Places and Time” group is now in charge of standardizing the different entities. The RAMEAU National Center (CNR) will implement the decisions about the Syntax Guide, the new formats, new cataloging rules, and training for the network users.

## Timeline for standardization and implementation of RAMEAU entities

	<b>National standardization</b>  <i>Pilot group : “Concepts, Places and Time” national group</i>	<b>Technical and professional implementation (modifying the RAMEAU indexing guide, new formats, training users)</b>  <i>Pilot groups : CNR (Centre National RAMEAU : RAMEAU National Center), “Concepts, Places and Time” national group , and CFU (Comité français Unimarc : French Unimarc Committee)</i>
2 <sup>nd</sup> Semester 2017	Unifying Topic vocabulary : no more duplicates (Headings/Subdivisions) ,one single list of subdivisions	Genre and form Vocabulary (already implemented in Unimarc format)
1st Semester 2018	Unifying Topic vocabulary : no more duplicates (Headings/Subdivisions) ,one single list of subdivisions / Place names	<b>Implementation of Genre and form Vocabulary</b> Modifying the RAMEAU indexing Guide (parts dealing with subdivisions)
2nd Semester 2018	Place names	Improving the RAMEAU indexing Guide (Topic vocabulary)
1st Semester 2019	Time span and events	<b>Implementation of the unified Topic vocabulary</b> Directives for implementing the standard for place names
2nd Semester 2019	Time span and events	Directives for implementing the standard for place names
1 <sup>st</sup> Semester 2020	Concepts/RES (choice between controlled descriptors and natural language)	<b>Implementation of the standard for place names</b> Directives for implementing the standard for Time span and events
2nd Semester 2020	Concepts /RES (choice between controlled descriptors and natural language)	Directives for implementing the standard for Time span and events
1st Semester 2021		<b>Implementation of the standard for Time span and events</b> Directives for implementing the standard for Concepts
2nd Semester 2021		<b>Implementation of the standard for Concepts</b>
1 January 2022	<b>Conclusion of remodeling RAMEAU indexing language</b>	