On December 8, 2021, Amber Billey (U.S.) and Sarah Theimer (U.S.) presented on Open Cataloging Rules, the freely available cataloging code alternative to RDA. The Open Cataloging Rules (OCR) project was initiated in 2019 by Billey to create easy to understand, open cataloging rules for the cataloging community. Though initially hesitant to create another standard, the most heavily used cataloging code in academic libraries, RDA, is difficult to comprehend, requires a subscription to access, and is priced outside the reach of many practitioners and institutions. The people creating OCR believe that the library community needs an openly available practical alternative, with concrete guidelines so catalogers can efficiently and economically accomplish their work. The library community is moving away from closed standards to open and interoperable standards. Open rules promote inclusion by enabling professional cooperation outside of legacy institutional power-structures and encourage adoption by smaller, financially-challenged organizations. The Library of Congress Cataloging Manual, the Program for Cooperative Cataloging recommendations, Describing Archives: A Content Standard (DACS), and Descriptive Cataloging of Rare Materials (DCRM) are all open access publications.

Before formulating rules, the committee used the IFLA Statement of International Cataloging Principles topics as a philosophical basis. OCR guidelines and models strive to be compatible with shared cataloging environments to allow for broad usage. The OCR guidelines are intended to cover a general description of library materials for use primarily in (but not limited to) a MARC-based environment. The element set (starting with non-rare monographic resources) is based on the ISBD 2011 and the PCC Core/BIBCO standard record.

The OCR Core Committee is divided into two sub-groups. The Rules Subcommittee is comparing instructions from a variety of sources, identifying differences and commonalities, and determining optimal wording for element definitions and cataloging rules. The Platform Subcommittee has identified an appropriate platform for publishing the final project and decided on a Git-based publication following SAA DACS and DCRM-RDA examples. In the future OCR plans on adding instructions for other types of materials which do not already have freely available cataloging guidelines. We hope to create a community where people can ask questions, receive answers, and where text and examples can be adjusted to meet needs. The text could be extended beyond MARC if the community decides that is needed. Individuals are invited to join the Google group at http://opencatalogingrules.org and the OCR Google Group email discussion list at https://groups.google.com/forum/#!forum/opencatalogingrules. We hope to inspire the cataloging community to band together and use the power of open access.