27 October 2021

Subject: Defining Policies, Standards, Procedures, and more

RSA inconsistently uses various terms to define the type of guidance provided to the membership. Conversations with members, committees, the User's Group, the RSA Board, and planning for the new RSA Support Site, revealed that RSA needs to formalize our document terminology. Since the 1990's, the terms policy and standard have been used interchangeably. The results in member confusion and reduced compliance.

Effective November 2, 2021, RSA will use terms as explained below. This shift in document definitions will require us to modify or rename many existing documents. We will also need to adjust our documentation methodology to better serve our member libraries. Much of this modification will happen as we build out the new RSA Support Site.

Policy – *Produced by the RSA Board, Users Group, Subcommittees, and/or RSA Staff. Approved by the RSA Board or Users Group*

Policy approval is defined in RSA's Bylaws in Article 5: Governance Structure, Section 1: RSA Board of Directors, A. Duties.
Item 8). "Approve policies as recommended by RSA Staff, Users Group, or standing committees. The RSA Board of Directors routinely forwards operational policies for review, comment and approval by the RSA User Group but may choose to implement operational policies on its own."

RSA defines a "policy" as:
- A statement of intent to set the direction of RSA's organizational goals, objectives, and culture
- May include goals or objectives outside of the current automation system's ability to enforce in software
- Formal rules proposed by the RSA Board, RSA membership, and RSA staff
- A document that is reviewed, modified, voted on, and approved by the RSA Board of Directors or the RSA Users Group if the Board has forwarded approval to Users Group
- Are applicable to the RSA member as a whole, or applicable to particular types of member libraries, or to members in a specific RSA membership level
- May include goals or objectives outside of the current automation system's ability to enforce in software

Policy examples include:
- [RSA Reciprocity Policy](#) (Current functionality of RSA's automation system is unable to fully achieve the goals of this policy)
- [RSA Receipt of Damaged Material Policy](#)
- [RSA Patron Registration Standards Policy](#) (This document will be renamed to remove the word "Standards" from the title. This policy will be reduced to include only the intent outlined in the first part of the document. A new, separate standards

document will be created that includes the standards and operational details mentioned in the existing document.)

Next Steps:
- All existing documents approved by the RSA membership will be renamed as "policies" when they are revised, replaced, or uploaded to the new RSA Support Site – whichever occurs first. This includes those with "standards" in their titles.
- Future policy documents will not include operational guidance but focus instead on the intended outcomes. Standards and procedures will provide the necessary operational guidance to implement a policy. Addressing operational considerations in standards and procedures will allow RSA more flexibility to make revisions to accommodate new or modified system or operational changes, with no need to revise and re-vote on the underlying policy.

Standard – *Produced by the RSA Staff, RSA Board, Users Group, and/or Subcommittees. Approved by RSA Staff.*

RSA defines a "standard" as:
- A mandatory course of action that supports the RSA Strategic Plan or approved policies
- Formal rules members are required to follow to ensure policies and objections are implemented as accurately and consistently as possible
- They may include guidance that falls outside of the scope of RSA's automation system (for example, a best practice for returning ILL items to their non-RSA owning library)
- Developed by RSA Staff, often in conjunction with membership or governance bodies

Standards examples include:
- [Cataloging Best Practices for RSA Member Libraries](#) (This document will be renamed in the future.)
- [Patron Notes Standard](#) (This document is an approved policy but contains no actual 'policy' or intent.)

Next Steps:
- Standards will be separated from existing policies, with separate 'standards' documents created when they are revised, replaced, updated, or uploaded to the new RSA Support site.
- RSA staff will review or issue new standards as necessary, or when policy, system, or operational changed occur.

Procedure – *Produced by the RSA Staff and/or Subcommittees. Approved by RSA Staff.*

RSA defines a "procedure" as:
- Step-by-step instructions the membership is required to perform to ensure the system operates effectively, in alignment with policy.
- Providing more detailed, in-depth guidance than a standard.
- Direction for how to put a policy into operational practice.
- Flexible enough for RSA staff to make necessary adjustments due to unforeseen circumstances and "bugs".

- The "cookbook" to accomplish a specific task. Policies or standards may have multiple procedures to implement their intent

Procedure examples include:
- [How to use the Global Item Modification Wizard](#) (Even though the document title includes "cheat sheet", it is actually a procedure)
- [RSA WorkFlows Upgrade Instructions](#)
- [Modify User/Preferred Name Bug](#) (This document is an emergency procedure that explains a workaround for the Modify User wizard system bug.)

Next Steps:
- Procedures will be separated from existing policies or standards, with separate 'procedure' documents created when they are revised, replaced, updated, or uploaded to the new RSA Support site.
- RSA staff will review or issue new procedures as necessary, or when policy, system, or operational changed occur.

Cheat Sheet – *Produced by the RSA Staff and/or Subcommittees. Approved by RSA Staff.*

RSA defines "cheat sheet" as:
- 'Just the facts' or key takeaways of a particular issue or task that is outlined in standards or procedures.
- Brief documents, ideally no longer than two pages
- Be supportive quick reference, not step-by-step 'how to' documents. (Many libraries print cheat sheets to keep near circulation or technical services computers.)

Cheat Sheet examples include:
- [Patron PIN Masking in WorkFlows](#) (This document combines a procedure and cheat sheet. The procedure will be separated from the cheat sheet in the next document revision.
- [WorkFlows Basic Cataloging Key Takeaways](#)
- [Discharge Item Transit Popup Box](#)

Next Steps:
- Cheat Sheets will be separated from existing policies, standards, or procedures with separate 'cheat sheet' documents created when they are revised, replaced, updated, or uploaded to the new RSA Support site.
- RSA staff will review or issue new cheat sheets as necessary, or when policy, system, or operational changed occur.

Guide – *Produced and approved by the RSA Staff.*

RSA defines "guide" as:
- "For further information," often multiple pages, that explains a particular aspect of our system, such as how holds work
- Written in language that is likely easier for members to understand than the formal language in the policy
- Provides additional guidance, recommendations, or supporting information about a policy, standard, or procedure

Guide examples include:
- [Getting Started with WorkFlows Item Categories 4 & 5](#)
- [Circulation Helpers](#)

Next Steps:
- Many of the existing documents titled 'Guide' are actually procedures and in need of revision.
- Guides will be separated from existing policies, standards, procedures, or cheat sheets with separate 'guide' documents created when they are revised, replaced, updated, or uploaded to the new RSA Support site.
- RSA staff will review or issue new guides as necessary, or when policy, system, or operational changed occur.

Naming Convention for Documents:

- All documents begin with the document title, followed by document type: policy, standard , procedure, cheat sheet, guide.
- All documents associated with a specific policy, standard, topic, issue, or task will use the same title, additional documents will inherit the title.
- Inherited titles are followed by the more specific topic, task, issue, or guidance they provide.

Examples of how documents will be named once RSA makes the necessary revisions. Note: title nesting is for clarification purposes only.

Patron Registration Policy
    Patron Registration Standard
        Patron Registration Procedures, Public, Academic, and Special Libraries
        Patron Registration Procedures, School Libraries

Reciprocity Policy
    Reciprocity Standard
        Reciprocity Procedure, New Items in Public Libraries
        Reciprocity Procedure, Standard Items in Public Libraries
        Reciprocity Procedure, Non-Public Libraries
            Reciprocity Cheat Sheet
            Reciprocity Guild

Notification Types, Settings, and Options Standards
    Notification Types, Settings, and Options Guide

RSA Item Renewal Policy
    RSA Item Renewal Procedure

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