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Proposal to replace DC Elements Creator, Publisher, Contributor with New Element Agent

Offered by the Agents Drafting Committee: David Bearman, Priscilla Caplan and Martin Dillon

For Discussion prior to and at DC 6, in Washington, DC, November 2-4, 1998.

Summary

Information resources are produced and disseminated by people, organizations, and systems. In the DC workshop series, the roles of creator, publisher and contributor (equivalent to 'other') were given separate metadata elements reflecting their widespread use. In practice, however, the correct attribution of a given agent to one of these elements is often difficult either because their role is not known or because it does not precisely fit any or only one of the categories. Film Director, Talkshow Host, List Owner, Database Interface Designer, Sampling Software Program, or Webcaster User Profile, are all instances of traditional and new roles that are not easily mapped into the three DC elements.

Since DC5, informal groups have been struggling with this problem in a series of face-to-face, virtual and teleconferences. On October 16, following a teleconference, Stu Weibel asked a drafting committee composed of David Bearman, Priscilla Caplan and Martin Dillon to draft a consensus report to be sent to the meta2 list for discussion prior to the DC6 meeting in Washington.

The drafting committee proposes:

1. To adopt the element DC.Agent in place of DC.Creator, DC.Publisher and DC.Contributor
2. To adopt the USMARC Relator Codes as authorized values of dcq:AgentType for roles of persons and organizations with respect to the resource.

Discussion of this proposal in advance of the DC6 meeting is strongly encouraged in order that positions can be articulated and become understood.

Background

Proposal 1

Several approaches had been suggested to address these issues. After the discussions of the various groups, two positions remained:

a) New Guidelines for Using the Existing Element Set

It had been suggested to leave the 15 DC elements, but to provide instructions that "Contributor" is the preferred element for people, organizations and agents involved in production and dissemination of information resources unless the role of author or publisher is explicitly intended

(as in bibliographic resources). Thus, DC.Contributor = X, with Role qualifier = 'Publisher' is equivalent to DC.Publisher = X.

- Advantages: Politically easier. Allows DC to remain "stable". Grandfathers all existing DC data. Works with DC Simple.
- Disadvantages: Establishes two ways of expressing the same metadata. Requires cataloguers and end users in the future to be aware of all variants. May require systems designers to have to develop both integrated and separate indexes.

b) "Agent" replaces Creator, Contributor and Publisher

It had been suggested to reduce the DC element set to 13 elements by replacing Creator, Contributor and Publisher with "Agent" for persons, organizations and agents involved in production and dissemination of information resources. Multiple Agents would be distinguished by the qualifier 'Role'.

- Advantages: Intellectually clean/simple. Cataloguers and users can distinguish roles or not, with predictable results. Easier to add extensible schemes for domains with different terminologies.
- Disadvantages: Destabilizes DC which is politically difficult. Further erodes DC Simple.

The drafting group recommends adoption of approach b)

Proposal 2

Regardless of what action or inaction is taken with respect to the DC elements Creator, Publisher and Contributor, there is a need to define roles for use with dcq. It was agreed that:

- All proposals will require 'Role' to be an extensible scheme. Specialized communities must be able to create term lists to satisfy their needs.
- In neither case would any of the "Roles" encompass intellectual property management roles which would be recorded in a packet pointed to by the DC Rights element.

A set of DC Roles should be proposed

Three approaches could be taken to the creation of a set of DC Roles.

- a. A new list could be created. It might, for example, include a dozen high level concepts with opportunities for specialized domains to adopt schemes of terms fitting under these headings. Such a list of twelve categories was proposed, but no DC created list was seen to have greater value than existing schemes.
- b. A minimalist list could be adopted. It could consist of the three terms we have already found unsatisfactory (Creator, Publisher, Contributor) or it could include a few more, as in:
 - Author - for creators of the intellectual content of textual and non-textual works, including composer, artist, photographer etc.
 - Publisher - (we need a very traditional definition here that would restrict to formal issuance by corporate agencies)
 - Disseminator - for distribution that doesn't fit formal publication, like me posting my own paper on a website
 - Producer - for those responsible for funding and technical production aspects

- Contributor - for none of the above
- c. A more extensive list could be adopted from one being issued/maintained by an authoritative source: The USMARC Code List: RELATOR CODES, found at <http://www.loc.gov/marc/relators/re9802r1.html> was proposed. The list currently lacks some roles that communities using DC will feel are needed, but it has a simple mechanism for proposing their inclusion and is regularly updated by the Library of Congress.

The drafting group recommends adoption of approach c) with the following implementation notes:

- In automatic translation from previous DC files to Agent, write `dcq:AgentType=Creator`, `Publisher` or `Contributor` for grandfathering data.
- DC values for agent follow the Data Modeling working group decision. See Report of the Dublin Core Data Model Working Group . Section 4.2.
- The DC community can map `Creator`, `Publisher`, `Contributor` to the USMARC Relator codes so that `dcq:AgentType` can have these three and any other USMARC relator values indicating the agent's role in relation to the resource. The Library of Congress should be asked to maintain the list for additional types as proposed by DC users.