An Introduction to MODS: The Metadata Object Description Schema

Tech Talk By Daniel Gelaw Alemneh

October 17, 2007

Background: Why create metadata?

- Discover resources
- Identify resources
- Locate resources
- Bring resources together
- Distinguish between/among similar and dissimilar resources
- Record rights information
- Ensure long-term access & preservation

Approaches and Issues need to be considered

- Level of description
- Who will create metadata
- Controlled vocabularies, Authority controls…
- Presentation to users
- Are you going to share it?
  - Interoperability
  - Rights information

MODS Overview

- Metadata Object Description Schema
- Descriptive Metadata Standard
- An XML schema designed to encode descriptive metadata for digital objects
- Developed at LC; Network Development and MARC Standards Office (version 3.3)
- Originally designed for library use; may be used for other applications
- Derived from MARC

MODS Development

- XML increasingly used for markup for the web
- Investigating XML for MARC element set
- Need for descriptive metadata in XML;
  - something simpler than MARC (with natural language element names instead of numerical field names)
  - more interoperable than qualified DC (but rich enough for complex digital objects)

What is needed?

- A standard for metadata content analogous to AACR2
- A standardized framework for holding and exchanging metadata: analogous to the MARC record

MODS features and Advantages

- Tags are language-based, not numeric (eg.100)
- Elements are semantically parallel to MARC
- Doesn't assume use of any particular rules
- Element descriptions can be reused
- Use of XML schema allows for flexblity;
- Richer than Dublin Core
  - (not too rich as UNTL Metadata, though)
- Hierarchical;
  - (supports rich description and works well UNTL)

MODS Elements

1. Title Info
2. Name
3. Type of resource
4. Genre
5. Origin Information
6. Language
7. Physical description
8. Abstract
9. Table of contents
10. Target audience

MODS Elements

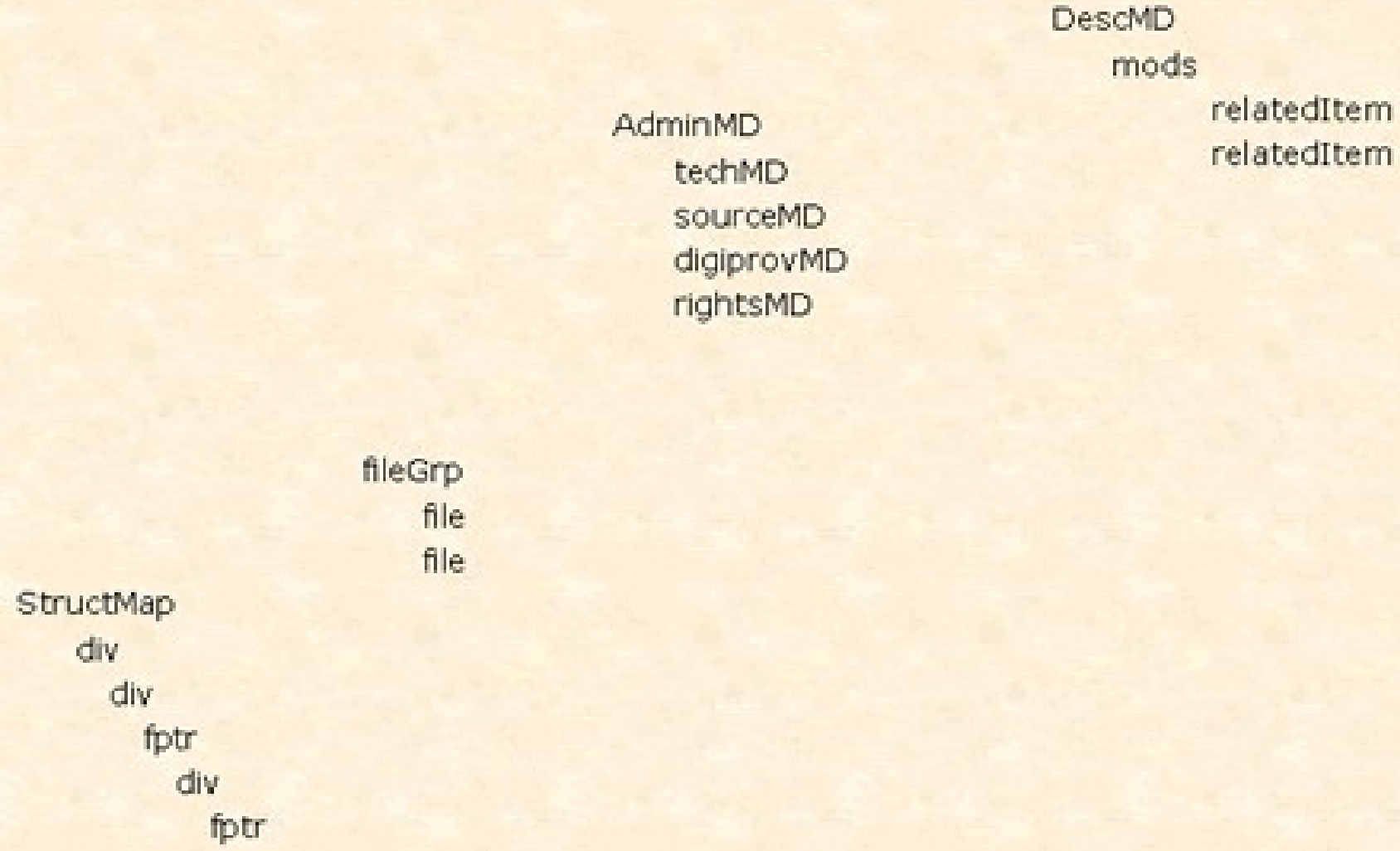
10. Target audience
11. Note
12. Subject
13. Classification
14. Related item
15. Identifier
16. Location
17. Access conditions
18. Part
19. Extension
20. Record Info

Crosswalks

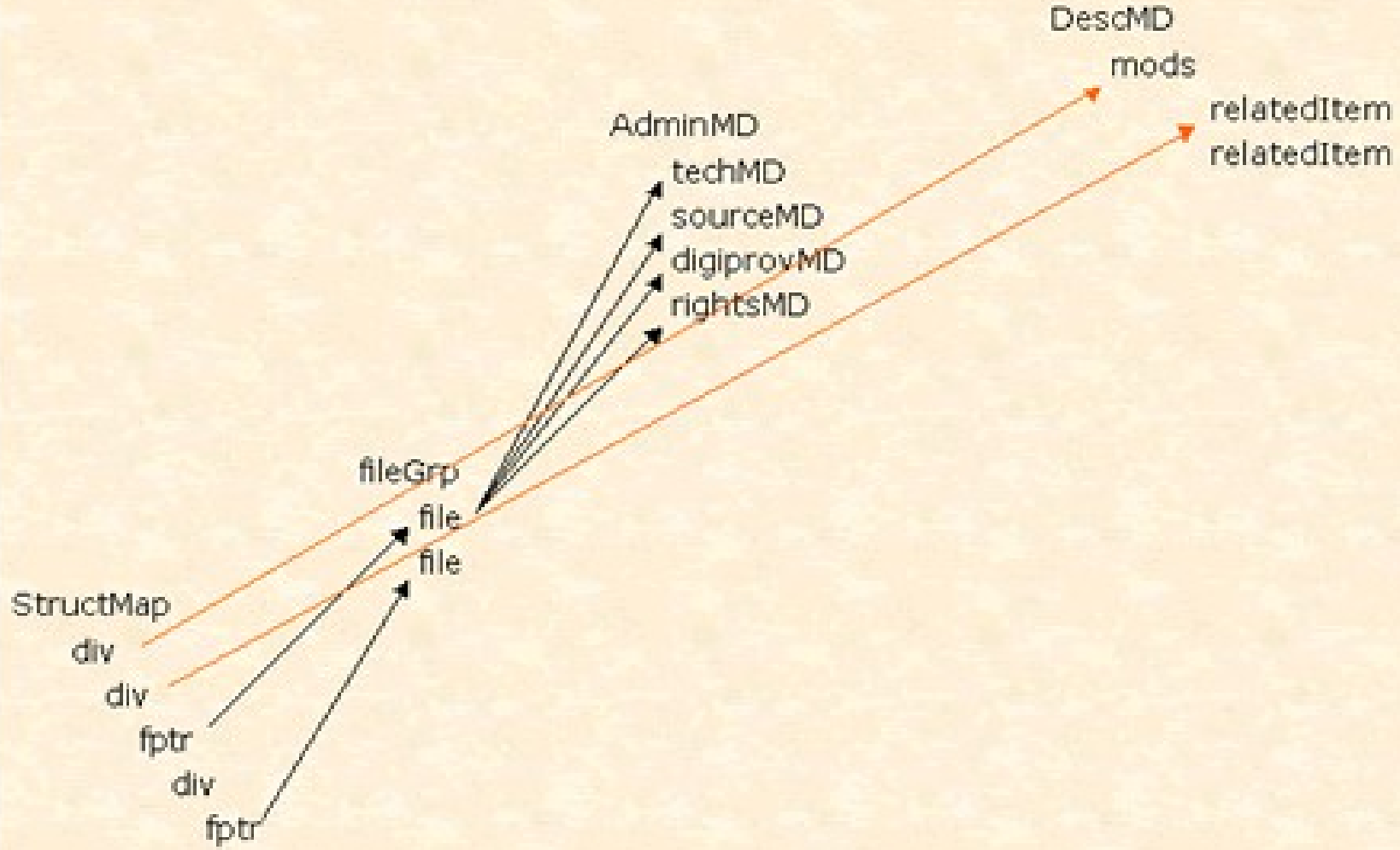
Issues in converting existing records to MODS:

- Multiple elements are indicated for a single MODS element
- Conversions without some loss of data could be difficult
  - MARC to MODS
  - MODS to MARC
  - Dublin Core (simple) to MODS
  - UNTL to MODS

Linking in METS Documents
(XML ID/IDREF links)



Linking in METS Documents
(XML ID/IDREF links)



But will MODS catch on?

- Backed by Library of Congress
- Interest from Libraries' community
  - 25 implementers
- There are more established competitors out there,
  - Dublin Core, UNTL Metadata, etc.
- It might be difficult for MODS to make big impact today (for all communities). However, MODS offers exciting possibilities for the digital library!

Useful addresses

MODS

- http://www.loc.gov/standards/mods/

METS

- http://www.loc.gov/standards/mets/

UNTL to MODS

- http://www.library.unt.edu/digitalprojects/assets/files/metadata/mapping/UNTL-MODS.pdf

Thank you!