

The OLAC Metadata Set and Controlled Vocabularies

Steven Bird

Linguistic Data Consortium
University of Pennsylvania
3615 Market Street, Suite 200
Philadelphia, PA 19104-2608, USA
sb@ldc.upenn.edu

Gary Simons

SIL International
7500 West Camp Wisdom Road
Dallas, TX 75236, USA
Gary.Simons@sil.org

Abstract

As language data and associated technologies proliferate and as the language resources community rapidly expands, it has become difficult to locate and reuse existing resources. Are there any lexical resources for such-and-such a language? What tool can work with transcripts in this particular format? What is a good format to use for linguistic data of this type? Questions like these dominate many mailing lists, since web search engines are an unreliable way to find language resources. This paper describes a new digital infrastructure for language resource discovery, based on the Open Archives Initiative, and called OLAC – the Open Language Archives Community. The OLAC Metadata Set and the associated controlled vocabularies facilitate consistent description and focussed searching. We report progress on the metadata set and controlled vocabularies, describing current issues and soliciting input from the language resources community.

1 Introduction

Language technology and the linguistic sciences are confronted with a vast array of *language resources*, richly structured, large and diverse. Multiple *communities* depend on language

resources, including linguists, engineers, teachers and actual speakers. Many individuals and institutions provide key pieces of the infrastructure, including archivists, software developers, and publishers. Today we have unprecedented opportunities to *connect* these communities to the language resources they need. First, inexpensive mass storage technology permits large resources to be stored in digital form, while the Extensible Markup Language (XML) and Unicode provide flexible ways to represent structured data and ensure its long-term survival. Second, digital publication – both on and off the world wide web – is the most practical and efficient means of sharing language resources. Finally, a standard resource description model, the Dublin Core Metadata Set, together with an interchange method provided by the Open Archives Initiative (OAI), make it possible to construct a union catalog over multiple repositories and archives.

In December 2000, an NSF-funded workshop on Web-Based Language Documentation and Description, held in Philadelphia, brought together a group of nearly 100 language software developers, linguists, and archivists who are responsible for creating language resources in North America, South America, Europe, Africa, the Middle East, Asia and Australia <http://www.ldc.upenn.edu/exploration/expl2000/>. The outcome of the workshop was the founding of the Open Language Archives Community (OLAC), an application of the OAI to digital archives of language resources, with the following purpose:

OLAC, the Open Language Archives Community, is an international partnership of institutions and individuals who are creating a worldwide virtual library of language resources by: (i) developing consensus on best current practice for the digital archiving of language resources, and (ii) developing a network of interoperating repositories and services for housing and accessing such resources.

This paper will describe the leading ideas that motivate OLAC, before focussing on the metadata set and the controlled vocabularies which implement part (ii) of OLAC's statement of purpose. Metadata elements of special interest to the language resources community include such things as language identification and language resource type. The corresponding controlled vocabularies ensure consistent description. For example, French language resources are specified using an official RFC-3066 designation (Alvestrand, 2001), instead of multiple distinct text strings like "French", "Francais" and "Français". A separate controlled vocabulary exists for resource type, and has items such as annotation/phonetic and description/grammar. Services for end-users can map controlled vocabularies onto convenient terminology for any target language. (A live demonstration accompanies this presentation.)

2 Locating Data, Tools and Advice

We can observe that the individuals who use and create language resources are looking for three things: data, tools, and advice. By DATA we mean any information that documents or describes a language, such as a published monograph, a computer data file, or even a shoebox full of hand-written index cards. The information could range in content from unanalyzed sound recordings to fully transcribed and annotated texts to a complete descriptive grammar. By TOOLS we mean computational resources that facilitate creating, viewing, querying, or otherwise using language data. Tools include not just software programs, but also

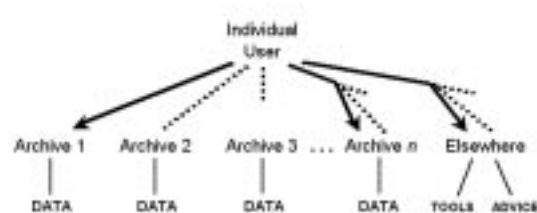


Figure 1: In reality the user can't always get there from here

the digital resources that the programs depend on, such as fonts, stylesheets, and document type definitions. By ADVICE we mean any information about what data sources are reliable, what tools are appropriate in a given situation, what practices to follow when creating new data, and so forth. In the context of OLAC, the term *language resource* is broadly construed to include all three of these: data, tools and advice.

Unfortunately, today's user does not have ready access to the resources that are needed. Figure 1 offers a diagrammatic view of the reality. Some archives (e.g. Archive 1) do have a site on the internet which the user is able to find, so the resources of that archive are accessible. Other archives (e.g. Archive 2) are on the internet, so the user could access them in theory, but the user has no idea they exist so they are not accessible in practice. Still other archives (e.g. Archive 3) are not even on the internet. And there are potentially hundreds of archives (e.g. Archive *n*) that the user needs to know about. Tools and advice are out there as well, but are at many different sites.

There are many other problems inherent in the current situation. For instance, the user may not be able to find all the existing data about the language of interest because different sites have called it by different names (low *recall*). The user may be swamped with irrelevant resources because search terms have important meanings in other domains (low *precision*). The user may not be able to use an accessible data file for lack of being able to match it with the right tools. The user may locate advice that seems relevant but have no basis for judging its merits.

2.1 Bridging the gap

2.1.1 Why improved web-indexing is not enough

As the internet grows and web-indexing technologies improve one might hope that a general-purpose search engine should be sufficient to bridge the gap between people and the resources they need, but this is a vain hope. The first reason is that many language resources, such as audio files and software, are not text-based. The second reason concerns language identification, the single most important property for describing language resources. If a language has a canonical name which is distinctive as a character string, then the user has a chance of finding any online resources with a search engine. However, the language may have multiple names, possibly due to the vagaries of Romanization, such as a language known variously as Fadicca, Fadicha, Fedija, Fadija, Fiadidja, Fiyadikky, and Fedicca (giving low recall). The language name may collide with a word which has other interpretations that are vastly more frequent, e.g. the language names Mango and Santa Cruz (giving low precision).

The third reason why general-purpose search engines are inadequate is the simple fact that much of the material is not, and will not, be documented in free prose on the web. Either people will build systematic catalogues of their resources, or they won't do it at all. Of course, one can always export a back-end database as HTML and let the search engines index the materials. Indeed, encouraging people to document resources and make them accessible to search engines is part of our vision. However, despite the power of web search engines, there remain many instances where people still prefer to use more formal databases to house their data.

This last point bears further consideration. The challenge is to build a system for "bringing like things together and differentiating among them" (Svenonius, 2000). There are two dominant storage and indexing paradigms, one exemplified by traditional databases and one exemplified by the web. In the case of language resources, the metadata is coherent enough to be stored in a formal database, but sufficiently distributed

and dynamic that it is impractical to maintain it centrally. Language resources occupy the middle ground between the two paradigms, neither of which will serve adequately. A new framework is required that permits the best of both worlds, namely bottom-up, distributed initiatives, along with consistent, centralized finding aids. The Dublin Core (DC) and the Open Archives Initiative provide the framework we need to "bridge the gap."

2.1.2 The Dublin Core Metadata Initiative

The Dublin Core Metadata Initiative began in 1995 to develop conventions for resource discovery on the web [dublincore.org]. The Dublin Core metadata elements represent a broad, interdisciplinary consensus about the core set of elements that are likely to be widely useful to support resource discovery. The Dublin Core consists of 15 metadata elements, where each element is optional and repeatable: Title, Creator, Subject, Description, Publisher, Contributor, Date, Type, Format, Identifier, Source, Language, Relation, Coverage, Rights. This set can be used to describe resources that exist in digital or traditional formats.

In "Dublin Core Qualifiers" (DCMI, 2000a) two kinds of qualifications are allowed: encoding schemes and refinements. An *encoding scheme* specifies a particular controlled vocabulary or notation for expressing the value of an element. The encoding scheme serves to aid a client system in interpreting the exact meaning of the element content. A *refinement* makes the meaning of the element more specific. For example, a Language element can be *encoded* using the conventions of RFC 3066 to unambiguously identify the language in which the resource is written (or spoken). A Subject element can be given a language *refinement* to restrict its interpretation to concern the language the resource is about.

2.1.3 The Open Archives Initiative

The Open Archives Initiative (OAI) was launched in October 1999 to provide a common framework across electronic preprint archives, and it has since been broadened to include digital repositories of scholarly materials regardless of their type [www.openarchives.org] (Lagoze and de Sompel, 2001).

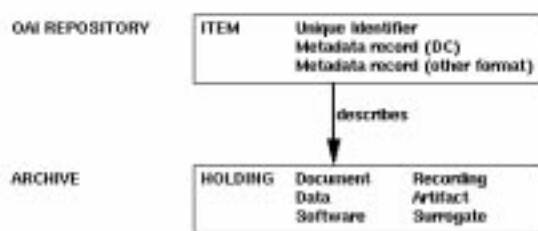


Figure 2: Bridging the gap through community infrastructure

In the OAI infrastructure, each participating archive implements a repository – a network accessible server offering public access to archive holdings. The primary object in an OAI-conformant repository is called an *item*, having a unique identifier and being associated with one or more metadata records. Each metadata record describes an archive holding, which is any kind of primary resource such as a document, raw data, software, a recording, a physical artifact, a digital surrogate, and so forth. Each metadata record will usually contain a reference to an entry point for the holding, such as a URL or a physical location, as shown in Figure 2.

To implement the OAI infrastructure, a participating archive must comply with two standards: the *OAI shared metadata set* (Dublin Core), which facilitates interoperability across all repositories participating in the OAI, and the *OAI metadata harvesting protocol*, which allows software services to query a repository using HTTP requests.

OAI archives are called “data providers,” though they are strictly just *metadata* providers. Typically, data providers will also have a submission procedure, together with a long-term storage system, and a mechanism permitting users to obtain materials from the archive. An OAI “service provider” is a third party that provides end-user services (such as search functions over union catalogs) based on metadata harvested from one or more OAI data providers. Figure 3 illustrates a single service provider accessing three data providers (using the OAI metadata harvesting protocol). End-users only interact with service providers.

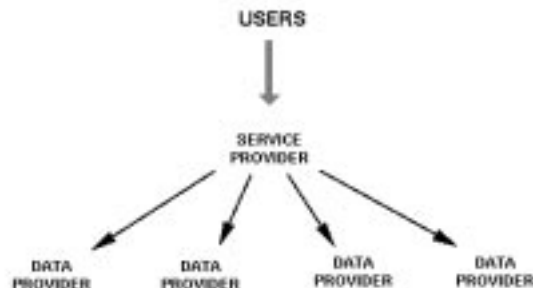


Figure 3: A Service Provider Accessing Multiple Data Providers

Over the past decade, the Linguist List has become the primary source of online information for the linguistics community, reaching out to over 13,000 subscribers worldwide, and having four complete mirror sites. The Linguist List will be augmenting its service by hosting the primary service provider for OLAC, and permitting end-users to browse distributed language resources at a single place.

2.2 Applying the OAI to language resources

The OAI infrastructure is a new invention; it has the bottom-up, distributed character of the web, while simultaneously having the efficient, structured nature of a centralized database. This combination is well-suited to the language resource community, where the available data is growing rapidly and where a large user-base is fairly consistent in how it describes its resource needs.

The primary outcome of the Philadelphia workshop was the founding of the Open Language Archives Community, and with it the identification of an advisory board, alpha testers and member archives. Details of these groups are available from the OLAC site [www.language-archives.org].

Recall that the OAI community is defined by the archives which comply with the OAI metadata harvesting protocol and that register with the OAI. Any compliant repository can register as an Open Archive, and the metadata provided by an Open Archive is open to the public. OAI data providers may support metadata standards in addition to the Dublin Core. Thus, a specialist community can define a metadata format which is specific to its domain. Service providers, data providers

and users that employ this specialized metadata format constitute an OAI *subcommunity*. The workshop participants agreed unanimously that the OAI provides a significant piece of the infrastructure needed for the language resources community.

In the same way that OLAC represents a specialized subcommunity with respect to the entire Open Archives community, there are specialized subcommunities within the scope of OLAC. For instance, the ISLE Meta Data Initiative is developing a detailed metadata scheme for corpora of recorded speech events and their associated descriptions (MPI ISLE Team, 2000). Similarly, the language data centers – the Linguistic Data Consortium (LDC) and the European Language Resources Association (ELRA) – are using OLAC metadata as the basis of a joint catalog, and will add elements and vocabularies for their specialized needs (price, rights, and categories of membership and use). For archived language resources that are of this kind, such a metadata scheme would support a richer description. This specialized subcommunity can implement its own service provider that offers focused searching based on its own rich metadata set. At the same time, the data providers will exposing OLAC and Dublin Core versions of the metadata, permitting the resources to be discovered by users of OLAC and OAI service providers.

2.3 Federation and integration of language resource archives

The OAI framework permits archives to interoperate. OAI archives support the Dublin Core metadata format and metadata harvesting protocol. OLAC archives additionally support the OLAC metadata format. Widespread adoption of these standards will permit language resource archives to be federated and integrated.

First, a collection of archives which support the same metadata format can be federated, in the sense that a virtual meta-archive can collect all the information into a single place, and end-users can query multiple archives simultaneously. To demonstrate this, the Linguistic Data Consortium has harvested the catalogs of three language

resource archives (LDC, ELRA, DFKI) and created a prototype service provider. A search for language=Bulgarian returns records from all three archives, as shown in Figure 4 (Bánik and Bird, 2001).

Second, a collection of archives which support the same metadata format can be integrated, in the sense that relational joins can be performed across different archives. This permits queries such as: “find all lexicon tools that understand a format for which Hungarian data is available.”

3 A Core Metadata Set for Language Resources

The OLAC Metadata Set extends the Dublin Core set only to the minimum degree required to express basic properties of language resources which are useful as finding aids.

All fifteen Dublin Core elements are used in the OLAC Metadata Set. In order to suit the specific needs of the language resources community, the elements have been qualified following principles articulated in “Dublin Core Qualifiers” (DCMI, 2000a) and exemplified in (DCMI, 2000b).

This section describes some of the attributes, elements and controlled vocabularies of the OLAC Metadata Set. Before launching into this discussion, we first review some XML terminology and explain some aspects of the OLAC representation which follow directly from our choice of XML.

3.1 Aside: XML representation

The Extensible Markup Language (XML) is the universal format for structured documents and data on the Web [www.w3.org/XML]. The key building block of an XML document is the *element*. An element has a *name*, *attributes* and *content*. Here is an example of an element Language with attributes refine and code, and free-text content:

```
<Language refine="OLAC" code="x-sil-BAN">
  Foreke Dschang</Language>
```

In general, XML elements may contain other elements, or they may be empty. XML Document Type Definitions (DTDs) and XML schemas are grammars that define the structure of a valid XML document, and they limit the arrangement of XML elements in a document. We believe it

oai:ldc:LDC94T5	
Date:	1994
Title:	ECI Multilingual Text
Type:	text
Identifier:	1-58563-033-3
Subject.language:	Albanian, Bulgarian , Chinese, Czech, Dutch, English, Estonian, French, Gaelic, German, Greek, Italian, Japanese, Latin, Lithuanian, Malay, Spanish, Danish, Uzbek, Norwegian, Portuguese, Russian, Serbian, Swedish, Turkish, Tibetan
Identifier:	http://www ldc upenn edu/Catalog/LDC94T5.html
Description:	Recommended Applications: information retrieval, machine translation, language modeling
oai:elra:L0030	
Title:	Bulgarian Morphological Dictionary
Date:	1998
Subject.language:	Bulgarian
Description:	67,500 entries divided into 242 inflectional types (including proper nouns), morphosyntactic information for each entry, and a morphological engine (MS DOS and WINDOWS 95/NT) for morphological analysis and generation
Identifier:	http://www.icp.inpg.fr/ELRA/cata/text_det.html#bulmodic
oai:dfki:KPML	
Title:	KPML
Creator:	Bateman and many others
Subject.language:	Spanish, Russian, Japanese, Greek, German, French, English, Czech, Bulgarian
Format.os:	Windows NT, Windows 98, Windows 95/98, Solaris
Type.functionality:	Software: Annotation Tools, Grammars, Lexica, Development Tools, Formalisms, Theories, Deep Generation, Morphological Generation, Shallow Generation
Description:	Natural Language Generation Linguistic Resource Development and Maintenance workbench for large scale generation grammar development, teaching, and experimental generation. Based on systemic-functional linguistics. Descendent of the Penman NLG system.
Identifier:	http://www.purl.org/net/kpml
Description:	Contact: bateman@uni-bremen.de
Relation.requires:	Windows: none; Solaris: CommonLisp + CLIM

Figure 4: Querying the Prototype Service Provider for Bulgarian Resources

is important to use a formal mechanism for validating a metadata record. Following the OAI, we use XML schemas to specify the OLAC metadata format.

XML schemas make it possible for element content and attribute values to be constrained according to the element name. However, XML schemas do not permit element content to be constrained on the basis of the attribute value. Accordingly, in implementing qualified Dublin Core using XML, we are limited to using one encoding scheme (or controlled vocabulary) per element.

There are two cases we need to consider here. In the case where all refinements of an element employ the same encoding scheme, we use the element name as is and add a refine attribute with a fixed value. This documents that the particular encoding scheme has been used, and ensures that the element cannot be confused with a corresponding unqualified Dublin Core element (see the above example). In the case where different refinements of an element employ different encoding schemes, then a unique element must be defined. Following (DCMI, 2000b), we define such elements by concatenating the Dublin Core element name and the refinement name with an intervening dot. An example is shown below:

```
<Format.encoding code="iso-8859-1"/>
```

3.2 Attributes used in implementing the OLAC Metadata Set

Three attributes – refine, code, and lang – are used throughout the metadata set to handle most qualifications to Dublin Core. Some elements in the OLAC Metadata Set use the refine attribute to identify element refinements. These qualifiers make the meaning of an element narrower or more specific. A refined element shares the meaning of the unqualified element, but with a more restricted scope (DCMI, 2000a).

Some elements in the OLAC Metadata Set use the code attribute to hold metadata values that are taken from a specific encoding scheme. When an element may take this attribute, the attribute value specifies a precise value for the element taken from a controlled vocabulary or formal notation (§3.4). In such cases, the element content may

also be used to specify a freeform elaboration of the coded value.

Every element in the OLAC Metadata Set may use the lang attribute. It specifies the language in which the text in the content of the element is written. The value for the attribute comes from a controlled vocabulary OLAC-Language. By default, the lang attribute has the value “en”, for English. Whenever the language of the element content is other than English, the lang attribute should be used to identify the language. By using multiple instances of the metadata elements tagged for different languages, data providers may offer their metadata records in multiple languages.

In addition, there is a lang attribute on the <olac> element that contains the metadata elements for a given metadata record. It lists the languages in which the metadata record is designed to be read. This attribute holds a space-delimited list of language codes. By default, this attribute has the value “en”, for English, indicating that the record is aimed only at English readers. If an explicit value is given for the attribute, then the record is aimed at readers of all the languages listed.

Service providers should use this information in order to offer multilingual views of the metadata. When a metadata record lists only one alternative language, then all elements are displayed (regardless of their individual languages), unless the user has requested to suppress all records in that language. When a metadata record has multiple alternative languages, the user should be able to select one and have display of elements in the other languages suppressed. An element in a language not included in the list of alternatives should always be displayed (for instance, the vernacular title of a work).

3.3 The elements of the OLAC Metadata Set

In this section we present a synopsis of the elements of the OLAC metadata set. For each element, we provide a one sentence definition followed by a brief discussion, systematically borrowing and adapting the definitions provided by the Dublin Core Metadata Initiative (DCMI, 1999). Each element is optional and repeatable.

Contributor: An entity responsible for making contributions to the content of the resource. Examples of a Contributor include a person, an organization, or a service. The refine attribute is optionally used to specify the role played by the named entity in the creation of the resource, using the controlled vocabulary OLAC-Role.

Coverage: The extent or scope of the content of the resource. Coverage will typically include spatial location or temporal period. Where the geographical information is predictable from the language identification, it is not necessary to specify geographic coverage.

Creator: An entity primarily responsible for making the content of the resource. The refine attribute is optionally used to specify the role played by the named entity in the creation of the resource, using the controlled vocabulary OLAC-Role.

Date: A date associated with an event in the life cycle of the resource. The refine attribute is optionally used to refine the meaning of the date using values from a controlled vocabulary (for instance, date of creation versus date of issue versus date of modification, and so on). The vocabulary for refinements to Date is defined in (DCMI, 2000a).

Description: An account of the content of the resource. Description may include but is not limited to: an abstract, table of contents, reference to a graphical representation of content, or a free-text account of the content.

Format: The physical or digital manifestation of the resource. Typically, Format may include the media-type or dimensions of the resource. Format may be used to determine the software, hardware or other equipment needed to use the resource. The code attribute identifies the format using the controlled vocabulary OLAC-Format.

Format.cpu: The CPU required to use a software resource. The code attribute identifies the CPU using the controlled vocabulary OLAC-CPU.

Format.encoding: An encoded character set used by a digital resource. For a digitally encoded text, Format.encoding names the

encoded character set it uses. For a font, Format.encoding names an encoded character set that it is able to render. For a software application, Format.encoding names an encoded character set that it can read or write. The code attribute is used to identify the character set using the controlled vocabulary OLAC-Encoding.

Format.markup: The OAI identifier for the definition of the markup format. Format.markup provides an OAI identifier for an XML DTD, schema or some other definition of the markup format. (This has the side-effect of ensuring that the format definition is archived somewhere). For a software resource, Format.markup names a markup scheme that it can read or write. The code attribute identifies the markup scheme using the controlled vocabulary OLAC-Markup.

Format.os: The operating system required to use a software resource. The code attribute is used to identify the operating system using the controlled vocabulary OLAC-OS. Additional restrictions for operating system version, may be specified using the element content.

Format.sourcecode: The programming language(s) of software distributed in source form. The code attribute identifies the language using the controlled vocabulary OLAC-Sourcecode.

Identifier: An unambiguous reference to the resource within a given context. Recommended best practice is to identify the resource by means of a string or number conforming to a globally-known formal identification system (e.g. URIs, ISBNs). For non-digital archives, Identifier may use the existing scheme for locating a resource within the collection.

Language: A language of the intellectual content of the resource. Language is used for a language the resource is in, as opposed to the language it describes (see Subject.language). It identifies a language that the creator of the resource assumes that its eventual user will understand. The code attribute is used to make a precise

identification of the language using the controlled vocabulary OLAC-Language.

Publisher: **An entity responsible for making the resource available.** Examples of a publisher include a person, an organization, or a service.

Relation: **A reference to a related resource.** This element is used to document relationships between resources. The refine attribute is used to refine the nature of the relationship using values from a controlled vocabulary (for instance, is replaced by, requires, is part of, and so on). The vocabulary for refinements to Relation is defined in (DCMI, 2000a).

Rights: **Information about rights held in and over the resource.** Typically, a Rights element will contain a rights management statement for the resource, or reference a service providing such information. Rights information often encompasses intellectual property rights (IPR), copyright, and various property rights. The code attribute is used to make a summary statement about rights using the controlled vocabulary OLAC-Rights.

Rights.software: **Information about rights held in and over a software resource.** A rights statement pertaining to software, using the controlled vocabulary OLAC-Software-Rights.

Source: **A reference to a resource from which the present resource is derived.** For instance, it may be the bibliographic information about a printed book of which this is the electronic encoding or from which the information was extracted.

Subject: **The topic of the content of the resource.** Typically, a Subject will be expressed as keywords, key phrases or classification codes that describe a topic of the resource. Recommended best practice is to select a value from a controlled vocabulary or formal classification scheme.

Subject.language: **A language which the content of the resource describes or discusses.** As with the Language element, a code attribute is used to identify the language precisely.

Title: **A name given to the resource.** Typically, a title will be a name by which the resource

is formally known. A translation of the title can be supplied in a second Title element. The lang attribute is used to identify the language of these elements.

Type: **The nature or genre of the content of the resource.** The code attribute is used to identify the type using the Dublin Core controlled vocabulary DC-Type.

Type.data: **The nature or genre of the content of the resource, from a linguistic standpoint.** Type includes terms describing general categories, functions, genres, or aggregation levels for content. The code attribute is used to identify the type using the controlled vocabulary OLAC-Type.

Type.functionality: **The functionality of a software resource.** The code attribute is used to identify the type using the controlled vocabulary OLAC-Functionality.

Observe that some elements, such as Format, Format.encoding and Format.markup are applicable to software as well as to data. Service providers can exploit this feature to match data with appropriate software tools.

3.4 The controlled vocabularies

Controlled vocabularies are enumerations of legal values for the code attribute. In some cases, more than one value applies, in which case the corresponding element must be repeated, once for each applicable value. In other cases, no value is applicable and the corresponding element is simply omitted. In yet other cases, the controlled vocabulary may fail to provide a suitable item, in which case a similar item can be optionally specified and a prose comment included in the element content.

3.4.1 OLAC-Language

Language identification is an important dimension of language resource classification. However, the character-string representation of language names is problematic for several reasons: different languages (in different parts of the world) may have the same name; the same language may have a different name in each country where it is spoken; within the same country, the preferred name for a language may change over time; in the early history of discovering new languages (before names were

standardized), different people referred to the same language by different names; and for languages having non-Roman orthographies, the language name may have several possible romanizations. Together, these facts suggest that a standard based on names will not work. Instead, we need a standard based on unique identifiers that do not change, combined with accessible documentation that clarifies the particular speech variety denoted by each identifier.

The information technology community has a standard for language identification, namely, ISO 639 (ISO, 1998). Part 1 of this standard lists two-letter codes for identifying 160 of the world's major languages; part 2 of the standard lists three-letter codes for identifying about 400 languages. ISO 639 in turn forms the core of another standard, RFC 3066 (formerly RFC 1766), which is the standard used for language identification in the `xml:lang` attribute of XML and in the language element of the Dublin Core metadata set. RFC 3066 provides a mechanism for users to register new language identification codes for languages not covered by ISO 639, but very few additional languages have been registered.

Unfortunately, the existing standard falls far short of meeting the needs of the language resources community since it fails to account for more than 90% of the world's languages, and it fails to adequately document what languages the codes refer to (Simons, 2000). However, SIL's *Ethnologue* (Grimes, 2000) provides a complete system of language identifiers which is openly available on the Web. OLAC will employ the RFC 3066 extension mechanism to build additional language identifiers based on the *Ethnologue* codes. For the 130-plus ISO-639-1 codes having a one-to-one mapping onto *Ethnologue* codes, OLAC will support both. Where an ISO code is ambiguous – such as `mhk` for “other Mon Khmer languages” – OLAC will require the *Ethnologue* code. New identifiers for ancient languages, currently being developed by LINGUIST List, will be incorporated. These language identifiers are expressed using the code attribute of the `Language` and `Subject.language` elements. The free-text content of these elements may be used to specify an alternative human-readable name for the language (where the name

specified by the standard is unacceptable for some reason) or to specify a dialect (where the resource is dialect-specific).

3.4.2 OLAC-Type

After language identification, another dimension of central importance is the linguistic type of a resource. Notions such as “lexicon” and “grammar” are fundamental to OLAC, and the discourse of the language resources community depends on shared assumptions about what these types mean.

We believe that it is helpful to distinguish at least four top-level types: transcription, annotation, description and lexicon, each defined broadly as proposed below. A transcription is any time-ordered symbolic representation of a linguistic event. An annotation is any kind of structured linguistic information that is explicitly aligned to some spatial and/or temporal extent of a linguistic record (such as a recorded signal or an image). A description is any description or analysis of a language; unlike a transcription or an annotation, the structure of a description is independent of the structure of the linguistic events that it describes. A lexicon is any record-structured inventory of linguistic forms.

For each of these top-level types we envision a more specific vocabulary to facilitate greater precision. For example, an orthographic transcription would have the code `transcription/orthographic`. Other subtypes could include: `phonetic`, `prosodic`, `morphological`, `gestural`, `part-of-speech`, `syntactic`, `discourse`, `musical`. The annotation type would include these subtypes, and add others to cover spatial annotation of images (e.g. for OCR annotation of textual images or for isogloss maps).

The description type could have subtypes for `grammatical`, `phonological`, `orthographic`, `paradigms`, `pedagogical`, `dialectal` and `comparative`. The lexicon type could also carry subtypes to distinguish `wordlists`, `wordnets`, `thesauri` and so forth.

3.4.3 Other controlled vocabularies

OLAC-CPU: A vocabulary for identifying the CPU(s) for which the software is available, in the case of binary distributions: `x86`, `mips`, `alpha`, `ppc`, `sparc`, `680x0`.

OLAC-Encoding: A vocabulary for identifying the character encoding used by a digital resource, e.g. `iso-8859-1`, ...

```

<?xml version="1.0" encoding="UTF-8"?>
<olac
  xmlns="http://www.language-archives.org/OLAC/0.3/"
  xmlns:xsi="http://www.w3.org/2001/XMLSchema-instance"
  xsi:schemaLocation="http://www.language-archives.org/OLAC/0.3/
    http://www.language-archives.org/OLAC/olac-0.3b1.xsd">
  <Title>KPML</Title>
  <Identifier>http://www.purl.org/net/kpml/</Identifier>
  <Creator refine="Author">Bateman, John</Creator>
  <Subject.language code="es"/> <Subject.language code="ru"/>
  <Subject.language code="ja"/> <Subject.language code="el"/>
  <Subject.language code="de"/> <Subject.language code="fr"/>
  <Subject.language code="en"/> <Subject.language code="cs"/>
  <Subject.language code="bg"/>
  <Format.os code="MSWindows/winNT"/> <Format.os code="MSWindows/win95"/>
  <Format.os code="MSWindows/win98"/> <Format.os code="Unix/Solaris"/>
  <Type.functionality>Annotation Tools, Grammars, Lexica, Development Tools,
    Formalisms, Theories, Deep Generation, Morphological Generation,
    Shallow Generation</type.functionality>
  <Relation refine="Requires">Windows: none; Solaris: CommonLisp + CLIM</Relation>
  <Description>Natural Language Generation Linguistic Resource Development and
    Maintenance workbench for large scale generation grammar development,
    teaching, and experimental generation. Based on systemic-functional
    linguistics. Descendent of the Penman NLG system.</Description>
</olac>

```

Figure 5: OLAC Metadata Record for KPML

OLAC-Format: A vocabulary for identifying the manifestation of the resource. The representation is inspired by MIME types, e.g. text/sf for SIL standard format. (Format.markup is used to identify the particular tagset.) It may be necessary to add new types and subtypes to cover non-digital holdings, such as manuscripts, microforms, and so forth and we expect to be able to incorporate an existing vocabulary.

OLAC-Functionality: A vocabulary for classifying the functionality of software, again using the MIME style of representation, and using the HLT Survey as a source of categories (Cole, 1997) as advocated by the ACL/DFKI Natural Language Software Registry. For example, written/OCR would cover “written language input, print or handwriting optical character recognition.”

OLAC-OS: A vocabulary for identifying the operating system(s) for which the software is available: Unix, MacOS, OS2, MSDOS, MSWindows. Each of these has optional subtypes, e.g. Unix/Linux, MSWindows/winNT.

OLAC-Rights: A vocabulary for classifying the rights held over a resource, e.g.: open, restricted, ...

OLAC-Role: A vocabulary for identifying the role of a contributor or creator of the resource, e.g.: author, editor, translator, transcriber, sponsor, ...

OLAC-Software-Rights: A vocabulary for classifying the rights held over a resource, e.g.: open-source, royalty-free-library, royalty-free-binary, commercial, ...

OLAC-Sourcecode: A vocabulary for identifying the programming language(s) used by software which is distributed in source form, e.g.: C++, Java, Python, Tcl, VB, ...

4 XML Representation

The OLAC metadata format consists of an XML schema for the element set, and a set of schemas for the controlled vocabularies. The latest versions are available from the OLAC website.

Figure 5 shows the OLAC metadata record corresponding to the KPML display from Figure 4. The top element is olac; this references the XML namespace for version 0.3b1 of the schema. The contents of the olac element are the OLAC metadata elements, which are optional and repeatable, and can occur in any order, as in Dublin Core.

Some elements employ the optional code or refine attributes, and/or free-text content. The

third attribute, lang, is not used here since the free-text content is in English (specified in the XML schema as the default). For the Creator element, the refine attribute narrows the meaning of creator to Author. For the Subject.language elements, the code attribute specifies nine languages using Ethnologue codes. A service provider would map these codes to human-readable names.

The Format.os element illustrates a two-level coding scheme, consisting of an OS “family”, followed by a specific operating system. Further details can be included in the free-text content if necessary. If a piece of software runs on all members of an OS family, then the more detailed designation can be omitted, e.g. code=“Unix”. The Type.functionality element is specified using free-text content, since the details of the controlled vocabulary OLAC-Functionality are still being worked out.

5 Conclusions

The OLAC Metadata Set and controlled vocabularies are works in progress, and are continuing to be revised with input from participating archives and members of the wider language resources community. We hope to have provided sufficient motivation and exemplification for our choices so that readers will easily be able to contribute to ongoing developments.

Even once OLAC is completely in place, there will still be documentation tasks which the creators of language resources will have to undertake, and new habits to acquire. It will always be necessary to identify and manually correct inconsistent or erroneous metadata. The OLAC controlled vocabularies will need to be refined indefinitely in response to changes in the world around us. The creators of language resources will need to generate metadata with each new resource and place the resource in a suitable archive. The communities will need to adopt best practices for archival storage formats.

Despite these intrinsic limitations, the OLAC Metadata Set and controlled vocabularies offer a *template* for resource description, providing two clear benefits over traditional full-text description and retrieval. First, the template guides the resource creator in giving a *complete description* of the resource, in contrast to prose descriptions

which may omit important details. And second, the template associates a resource with *standard labels*, such as creator and title, permitting users to do focussed searching. Resources and repositories can proliferate, yet common metadata and vocabularies will support centralized services giving users easy access to language resources.

References

- Harald Alvestrand. 2001. RFC 3066: Tags for the identification of languages (replaces 1766). <ftp://ftp.isi.edu/in-notes/rfc3066.txt>.
- Éva Bánik and Steven Bird. 2001. LDC experimental OLAC service provider. <http://wave ldc.upenn.edu/OLAC/sp-0.2/sp.php4>.
- Ronald Cole, editor. 1997. *Survey of the State of the Art in Human Language Technology*. Studies in Natural Language Processing. Cambridge University Press. <http://cslu.cse.ogi.edu/HLTSurvey/>.
- DCMI. 1999. Dublin Core Metadata Element Set, version 1.1: Reference description. <http://dublincore.org/documents/1999/07/02/dces/>.
- DCMI. 2000a. Dublin Core qualifiers. <http://dublincore.org/documents/2000/07/11/dcmes-qualifiers/>.
- DCMI. 2000b. Recording qualified Dublin Core metadata in HTML. <http://dublincore.org/documents/2000/08/15/dcq-html/>.
- Barbara F. Grimes, editor. 2000. *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*. Dallas: Summer Institute of Linguistics, 14th edition. <http://www.sil.org/ethnologue/>.
- ISO. 1998. ISO 639: Codes for the representation of names of languages-part 2: Alpha-3 code. <http://lcweb.loc.gov/standards/iso639-2/langhome.html>.
- Carl Lagoze and Herbert Van de Sompel. 2001. The Open Archives Initiative: Building a low-barrier interoperability framework. <http://www.cs.cornell.edu/lagoze/papers/oai-jcdl.pdf>.
- MPI ISLE Team. 2000. ISLE meta data elements for session descriptions proposal. http://www.mpi.nl/world/ISLE/documents/draft/ISLE_Metadata_2.0.pdf.
- Gary Simons. 2000. Language identification in metadata descriptions of language archive holdings. In Steven Bird and Gary Simons, editors, *Proceedings of the Workshop on Web-Based Language Documentation and Description*. <http://www ldc.upenn.edu/exploration/expl2000/papers/simons/>.
- Elaine Svenonius. 2000. *The Intellectual Foundation of Information Organization*. The MIT Press.