

Metadata Framework for Resource Discovery

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Section 1 Metadata Framework for Resource Discovery Overview

We must find new ways to organize and describe our extraordinary information resources, including an increasing body of digital content, for easier access and more widespread and wide-ranging use. It is by evaluating, describing and indexing, and disseminating content that we become a “knowledge institution,” and it is from that content that new knowledge will be created, contributing to a more successful Canadian society.

-- Library and Archives Canada. *Directions for Change*. November 15, 2003. p. 4.

Introduction

Creating a framework for resource discovery metadata is a crucial step to fulfilling the legislated mandate of Library and Archives Canada (LAC) to make the national documentary heritage known to Canadians and to facilitate access to it.

This Framework is the foundation upon which subsequent work will build. In 2006-2007, LAC will prepare detailed work plans for the key directions identified below, and begin work on the development of specific resource discovery metadata policies.

This framework builds upon the outcomes of a workshop attended by institutional stakeholders, which mapped key corporate strategies to perceived metadata needs and solutions. It is a deliverable of the Metadata Strategy Catalytic Initiative (MCI), which is mandated to demonstrate LAC leadership in the development and application of metadata standards by building and validating a client-focused metadata framework which facilitates integrated and seamless delivery of products and services using a holistic approach to description. The *Metadata Framework for Resource Discovery* was prepared by the MCI Advisory Board and members of the MCI team and included principal internal stakeholders.

Definitions

Metadata

Standardized sets of elements of description and other organizational information to contextualize, describe, manage and provide access to documentary heritage resources in any medium.

Resource Discovery

Activities related to finding information by matching user search terms with terminology in metadata records describing information holdings.

Purpose

The *Metadata Framework for Resource Discovery* is a set of guiding principles for the creation and management of metadata for resource discovery and related activities in LAC operational areas. The framework provides a strategic tool enabling LAC to move towards the new approaches to description envisioned in *Directions for Change*¹. It sets an overall strategic direction within which LAC policies, practices and plans related to resource description will be developed.

The *Metadata Framework for Resource Discovery* is intended to:

- **Improve Strategic Planning**

The framework facilitates a holistic, integrated approach to strategic planning for metadata by defining a corporate direction for resource discovery activities.

- **Improve Corporate Decision-making**

The framework facilitates corporate decision-making regarding the creation and management of metadata. Corporate decisions concerning metadata, such as resource allocation, integration, systems decisions, designs and development will be based upon the principles contained in this framework.

- **Provide a Communication Vehicle**

The framework communicates LAC metadata principles and guidelines to internal and external stakeholders and their communities.

- **Provide Metadata Leadership**

The framework focuses LAC leadership in metadata creation and management for internal operational areas and for LAC's stakeholders. This focus acknowledges the long history of partnership with standard-creating bodies and the leadership LAC has shown in providing tools to support resource discovery more broadly in Canada and throughout the world and addresses the concerns expressed by stakeholders regarding the need for uniform minimum cataloguing or metadata standards.²

Scope

The *Metadata Framework for Resource Discovery* establishes principles for resource description within LAC. The principles apply to published and unpublished documentary heritage resources in all media and formats. All areas of LAC are represented by the framework, which provides a consolidated corporate perspective on metadata.

¹ Library and Archives Canada. *Directions for Change*. November 15, 2003.

² Consultation with Stakeholders on Directions for Library and Archives Canada: Overview Report of Findings, 2005.

This framework is a component of LAC's new strategic direction and is connected to frameworks for allied functions and activities such as collection development³ and preservation.

Strategic Corporate Directions and the Metadata Framework

The Metadata Framework for Resource Discovery is aligned to the strategic corporate directions of LAC and the following key corporate business drivers.

Access is the priority

LAC is committed to placing citizens at the centre and to viewing their access, use and understanding of our resources as the primary driver. Metadata helps us achieve our goal of serving Canadians simply, effectively and in a timely fashion by making it possible for users to find, identify, select and obtain access to relevant documentary heritage resources.

Digital is mainstream

Digital is core to LAC business, and is being pursued as an over-arching strategic priority. Digital must be viewed as mainstream business because digital content is the expectation of the 21st century user. The digital paradigm has a significant impact on the amount of standardized metadata required for access and on the methods LAC uses to create or capture metadata.

Service to Government

The mandate to enable the effective and efficient management of Government of Canada information requires LAC to provide leadership and guidance on many information management functions including metadata for records management and content management. LAC's mandate to collect and manage government documents and government publications for long-term access and preservation provides an opportunity for integration of metadata-related activities.

Inclusiveness

LAC's resource discovery strategy includes providing support for the unique needs of defined communities such as persons with disabilities, Aboriginal and multicultural groups. Metadata plays a key role in the provision of services targeted at the needs of defined groups.

National role

LAC has identified standards development as one of its key national roles. LAC's leadership in many areas of metadata standards development ensures that LAC plays a

³ Library and Archives Canada. Collection Development Framework. March, 2004.
<http://www.collectionscanada.ca/collection/024/003024-200-e.html>

central role in the creation of an interoperable network which facilitates record exchange and the repurposing of metadata from external sources.

Section 2 Metadata Framework for Resource Discovery Principles

A Framework Continuum

The *Metadata Framework for Resource Discovery* establishes core metadata principles for LAC and defines how these principles harmonize with the institution's strategic directions.

The principles that form the foundation of the framework will be reviewed periodically to assess their continued effectiveness. Additions or changes to ensure continued alignment with LAC's strategic directions may result from the review process.

Guiding Principles

For the creation and management of metadata for resource discovery

Metadata promotes accessibility, supports Canada's cultural diversity, conforms to standards and is an important corporate resource. The following principles are in no particular order.

Access. LAC describes for access, an orientation which has an impact on the amount and kinds of metadata we make available. LAC recognizes the legitimate limits to access imposed by legislation to respect creator/donor rights, national security concerns, etc.

Integrated Access. Metadata, interoperable standards, and enterprise-wide systems enable integrated access to LAC published and unpublished documentary heritage resources for all Canadians.

Timeliness. LAC is committed to providing access to its holdings in a timely manner. Work processes, service standards, and information management systems are designed and implemented with a view to providing timely access to resource discovery metadata.

Levels of Description. Levels of description, i.e., the 'fullness' of resource discovery metadata provided for different categories of holdings, are based on current and anticipated user needs for access to the material. A basic or minimum level of metadata is provided to ensure comprehensive access to all LAC resources and to national documentary heritage resources. An enhanced level of description is provided on a selective basis when warranted by user demand or needs.

Exploitation of Metadata. LAC encourages the exploitation of metadata in innovative ways to provide user-friendly access to Canada's documentary heritage collection.

Digital Holdings. Metadata to manage digital resources is captured when a resource is acquired. The special characteristics of digital resources influence the extent of human intervention required and the nature of the metadata available.

Client Focus. Metadata is created to facilitate user access to the LAC collection and the national collection of documentary heritage resources. Metadata standards, policies, and practices are informed by research and data on the needs and information-seeking behaviours of LAC's clients.

Languages. As a federal institution, LAC is committed to providing access to its holdings in Canada's two official languages. LAC also acknowledges the importance of language to Aboriginal and multicultural groups. LAC is examining means to support the creation, sharing, and use of resource discovery metadata in languages other than English and French.

Standards. Professional metadata standards are used by LAC to improve resource discovery across the documentary heritage domain. LAC leads the Canadian contribution to international metadata standards through its participation in international standards committees. LAC also develops, maintains and promotes government of Canada and national metadata standards for use by LAC and other Canadian institutions.

Access Points and Search Methodologies. Access points and search methodologies such as name and subject headings and free-text searching, enhance resource discovery. LAC is committed to the use of tested and time-proven methods of creating access points as well as exploring and using new and innovative techniques, e.g., data mining, auto-categorization tools, and federated search, to improve and integrate searching of, and access to, its collection.

Corporate Resource. Metadata, like the LAC collection, is a valuable corporate resource. The principles and policies of modern management are applied in the creation, use, and preservation of metadata.

Externally-provided Metadata. LAC encourages users, creators and donors of documentary heritage material, including government departments, publishers, and authors, to provide resource discovery metadata. Standards, practices, and systems are developed to facilitate the transfer, and to exploit the use of externally-supplied metadata in order to avoid duplication of effort and to assure effective use of resources.

Resource-sharing. The creation and management of resource discovery metadata for the LAC collection and the national collection involve considerable resource expenditures on an ongoing basis. LAC leads and participates in various resource-sharing programs at the regional, national, and international levels to maximize the effective use of financial, human and material resources in making Canada's documentary heritage accessible to its citizens.