

ALA Annual Conference

Report from the Library of Congress New Bibliographic Framework Transition Initiative Update Forum

Anaheim, California, Sunday, June 24, 2012

Submitted by Bruce Evans

Featured panelists: Sally McCallum (Library of Congress), Beacher Wiggins (Library of Congress), Eric Miller (Zepheira)

Beecher Wiggins noted that there will be a period of inquiry for next few months for both LC staff and other constituencies concerning the Bibliographic Framework.

Sally McCallum announced that the Library of Congress had secured a contract with Zepheira to develop the code that will replace MARC, which will drive the work of the Bibliographic Framework Transition Initiative. The Bibliographic Framework will be driven by linked data. Another aim of the project will be to look for a mature understanding of the Semantic Web, along with needs of library community.

Eric Miller, representing Zepheira, has a library background, and worked with the W3C at MIT in the early of the forming of the Semantic Web. He was also a co-founder of the Dublin Core metadata standard. The Library of Congress and Zepheira will seek to have community involvement in the transition initiative, and will partner with the new ALCTS Metadata Standards Committee (formerly MARBI) to facilitate this. They specifically want to form a group of experimenters. Zepheira will provide tools for the experiments, but will seek institutions' participation. They foresee this effort as an ongoing "trial and error" process, and Sally mentioned that this process is not much different from how the MARC format was originally developed. Sally mentioned that good places to go for the latest news are the project's website: loc.gov/MARC/transition, and also the Bib Frame list (subscription e-mail: bibframe@loc.gov).

The goal of the transition initiative is to gradually translate MARC21 into a linked data model. The project seeks to maintain the solid, robust elements of the historical format. Once the process begins, the project group looks to produce prototypes and tools to enable testing and evaluation. They will create a roadmap for moving forward towards refinement, redevelopment, or alternative approaches. In addition to linked data, the project will also be based on the RDF model. Miller made the observation that "It's amazing that a coding standard [such as MARC] has lasted for 40 years."

In terms of the project's timeline for the near future, Miller reported that by mid-May/June 2012 the project group hopes to have an initial draft of a linked data model. In July/August they hope to have a prototype and translation services, prototype linked data interfaces, and a refined draft of a linked data model. Finally, by September they hope to release a linked data working draft for the community, with a project roadmap and deployment strategic report.

Miller stated that using linked data is predicated on the power of recombinant data; that is, recombining and reusing already-existing data. He noted that some benefits of linked data for libraries include:

- Increased flexibility for describing resources
- More reusable links from one record to another
- New options to contextualize external sources
- Ease of integration of catalogs into general purpose Web and social media
- Lightweight model that is easier to extend for future needs
- Facilitates re-use of data and ability for developers to incorporate into other apps

The specific analysis process will examine related initiatives involving linked data, such as those with RDA, FRBR, The British Library, the German Library, ONIX, WorldCat, and Schema.org. Additionally, this process will involve deconstructing MARC, specifically by identifying resources reflected in MARC records and core vocabularies associated with these MARC resources. This will create the roadmap to parsing out various fields in a MARC record and attaching linked data. The final step in the analysis process will be creating a supporting code (i.e. linked data model that will eventually replace MARC). This will involve creating a prototype and translation services, and setting forth a mechanism for validating the model.

Miller described the criteria for success of this project with the words “A seat at the table.” In short, create a process for developing the new code that will maximize community involvement, thereby coming up with the best possible end product.

Miller concluded his presentation with suggestions for how librarians can help. Right now, we need to learn what we can about linked data, and look around for already-existing library community initiatives. In August/September, get involved in the experiment and provide feedback. Another hoped-for result is unification of existing linked data models.