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Chaos-ONIX International-The New International Metadata Standard

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Chaos — ONIX International - The New International Metadata Standard

by **Sandra K. Paul** (President, SKP Associates) <Sandy@SKPAssociates.com>

The digital community has popularized the term metadata — “data about data.” The data about books has recently been standardized, so that publishers who want to send information about their products to retailers, e-tailers, wholesalers, or bibliographic authorities can do so in a standardized set of XML tags. Called ONIX (ONline Information eXchange) International, these metadata elements are a subset of the broader EDItEUR Product Information Communication Standard (EPICS). EPICS is compatible with the international metadata standard for all intellectual property, called <indcs — INTERoperability of Data in E-Commerce Systems. EDItEUR is the international organization concerned with electronic commerce standardization for the publishing community; Book And Serial Industry Communications (BASIS) is the U.S. contributor to the EDItEUR activities.

A committee of the Association of American Publishers (AAP) initially developed the ONIX specification, after several publishers complained that Amazon.com, BarnesandNoble.com, the wholesalers, and other e-tailers were asking them for different information about their books. Turned over to BASIC by the AAP in May, 2000, ONIX International includes the traditional bibliographic information about a book, author, title, publication date, list price, etc. It also includes the type of information one finds at e-tail sites, including the cover artwork, author biography, flap copy, and reviews. The ONIX International standard is available on the EDItEUR web site, www.editeur.org; <indcs can be found at www.indcs.org.

ONIX International was released by EDItEUR in mid-July, 2000. A broad spectrum of e-tailers, wholesalers, and bibliographic agencies in the United

States and United Kingdom are committed to accepting ONIX International tagged files from publishers by the fall of 2000. A special web site is being established to allow users of this format to discuss implementation problems, suggestions for changes, etc. It is expected that future ONIX International versions will include the metadata for video and audio works, as well as for e-books.

Librarians have told me that they are most interested in having their OPACs look more like Amazon.com than like a MARC record. Since few of them purchase books directly from the publishers that will be creating the ONIX International records, the question

arises as to where they might obtain this information. The most likely candidates seem to be Bowker, as the provider of other book information to libraries, or the wholesalers, some of which now provide MARC records along with books. This topic was discussed at the AAP/ALCTS Joint Committee meeting during ALA in July, 2000 and is certain to continue as librarians convinced their ILS vendors to provide OPACS with Amazon.com-like characteristics.

For more information about ONIX International, contact BASIC at www.bisg.org or call Sandy or Bill at 212/929-1393.

Webworthy

Column Editor: **Pamela M. Rose** (Health Sciences Library, University at Buffalo, 3435 Main St., Buffalo, NY 14214-3002 Ph: 716-829-2408) <pmrose@acsu.buffalo.edu>

Web sites selected for broad appeal, depth of information, and ease of access.

Sites are organized by broad subject area and are visited just prior to publication. Please let the editor know of any sites that are not accessible. Comments and suggestions welcome to Pamela M. Rose, Health Sciences Library, University at Buffalo, 3435 Main St., Buffalo, NY 14214-3002 716-829-2408 <pmrose@acsu.buffalo.edu>.

Unless otherwise noted in square brackets following the description, Internet addresses were published in Science, NetWatch column edited by Jocelyn Kaiser.

Alternative Medicine

An interactive, electronic herbal database, HerbMed provides hyperlinked access to the scientific data underlying the use of herbs for health. A freely available

project of the Alternative Medicine foundation, each listing provides six categories of information: Evidence for Activity, Warnings, Preparations, Mixtures, Mechanism of Action, and Other peripheral information like pictures and added links, or viewers can search the site. Over 100 herbs are currently listed from Achillea-Yarrow to Ziziphus-Jujube. <http://www.amfoundation.org/herbmed.htm>.

Astronomy

An incredible resource for astronomy and related information, Astroweb: Astronomy on the Internet, contains over 2800 distinct resource records. The listings are organized by categories including Organizations; Observing Resources; Data Resources; Abstracts, Publications, Libraries; People-related Resources; Software, Computer Science; Research Areas, Astronomy, Space Physics; Educational Resources, and Miscellaneous. The personal Web pages list alone offers a fasci-

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