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Webworthy-Alternative Medicine, Astronomy, Bioweapons and Botany

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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 EDIfICE Product Information Communication Standard (EPICS). EPICS is compatible with the international metadata standard for all intellectual property, called Interoperability of Data in E-Commerce Systems. EDIfICE is the international organization concerned with electronic commerce standardization for the publishing community; Book And Serial Industry Communications (BASIC) is the U.S. contributor to the EDIfICE 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 EDIfICE website, www.edifice.org. For indecs can be found at www.indecs.org.

ONIX International was released by EDIfICE 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.bigs.org or call Sandy or Bill at 212/929-1393.

Webworthy

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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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We believe that this restructuring of the current committee and task force structure will immediately save the library substantial time, money, and resources (structurally).

Considering the results of this study, it would be unreasonable to expect the Vice-Director to implement the Task Force recommendations (above). Therefore we suggest that the results be shelved until such time as the lowest geological strata (some respondents used the name “Hades”) accumulates remarkable abundance of ice crystals.

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A rating glimpse of astronomers’ visions; the Astronomy Departments list offers an instant astronomers a great snapshot of college choices, and Astronomy Pictures will dazzle viewers with some of the best photos of our universe. cdsweb.unistra.bg/astrowebw.html

Bioweapons
Would you hire a former bioweapons lab scientist? Just how much Pasteurella tularenis does it take to cause rabbit fever? Check out these two sites to explore the fascinating topic of Bioweapons.

— Offering an in-depth look at the Chemical and Biological Weapons Nonproliferation Project at the Stimson Center in Washington, D.C. www.stimson.org/cww.

— All the Virology on the WWW provides a list of disarmament projects and Department of Defense sites, and the full text of the 1972 Biological Weapons Convention. www.virology.net/garry/fawebww.html

Botany
Botanists and gardeners alike will be delighted to discover The International Plant Names Index (IPNI), a collaboration between The Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, The Harvard University Herbaria, and the Australian National Herbarium. Names and basic bibliographical details of all seed plants were merged from the Index Kewensis (IK), the Gray Card Index (GCI) and the Australian Plant Names Index (APNI) to create the “most comprehensive listing of seed plant names available to date.” With ongoing deduplication, standardization and verification of its currently over 1.3 million species, this will become the botanical names resource of choice. Future plans include setting up additional mirror sites, allowing users to contribute data directly, offering subscriptions, and allowing links to remote databases. Note that finding a plant name listed in IPNI does not mean it is the currently accepted name of a particular taxon. www.ipni.org

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University of Southern California, Texas A&M University, Virginia Tech University, University of Western Ontario, University of Wisconsin-Madison, and Yale University. The institutions are providing both the financial resources for the project as well as staff time for data collection and testing of methodologies. An article about the project appears in the June issue of ARL: A Bimonthly Report on Research Library Issues and Actions from ARL, CNI, and SPARC — http://www.arl.org/newslib/210/emetrics.html — and, throughout the project’s three phases, information about the study and its activities will be available through the ARL New Measures Initiative Website at <http://www.arl.org/stats/newmeas/newmeas.html>, which also hosts resources relating to the other ARL new measures projects. For further information, contact Rush Miller, University of Pittsburgh <rgmiller@pitt.edu>; Sherrie Schmidt, Arizona State University <sherrie.schmidt@asu.edu>; or Martha Kyvildou, ARL Senior Program Office for Statistics and Measurement <martha@arl.org>.

Well, y'all, I have a huge Rumors file still not tapped and I've run out of room! I told you the summer was unbelievably busy! Stay tuned for November!