



# Modernizing Description: Repurposing Publishers' Metadata

## 1. Introduction

This document should be read in the context of the three following documents, which are available on the Library and Archives Canada website (link) *Library and Archives Canada's Story Continues*; the *Documentary Heritage Management Framework*; and the *Acquisition Orientation Instrument*.

This document is part of a series of eight discussion papers that seek, through practical projects, to validate the four guiding principles and key roles of the *Documentary Heritage Management Framework* developed by Library and Archives Canada (LAC) during summer and fall 2009. Specifically, each pathfinder project seeks to demonstrate the applicability of these principles and roles in the context of the acquisition business pillar. Each pathfinder project will result in a final report, which will add overall conclusions about the implementation of the *Documentary Heritage Management Framework* and the *Acquisition Orientation Instrument*. Based on observations, the final report will be even more effective in contributing to the achievement of LAC's mandate, within the current operating environment.

## 2. Broad Principles

Like other memory institutions, Library and Archives Canada (LAC) plays a key role in the knowledge economy. The valuable collections at LAC foster innovation and the capacity for economic growth, both hallmarks of the knowledge economy. While information sources continue to be available in traditional print formats, the escalating digital environment poses a challenge to managing Canada's documentary heritage.

Central to the preservation of and continued access to Canada's documentary heritage is resource discovery enabled by resource description. LAC seeks a balance between its traditional and emerging practices. Modernization of resource description at LAC will address three main concerns: the elimination of redundancy by repurposing metadata, making the best use of LAC talent to enhance descriptive records, and the sharing of resource metadata.

Resource description involves the creation of a set of structured and standardized data called metadata, about documentary heritage and links related items for resource discovery. LAC follows international standards in creating these metadata records allowing them to be understood by and shared among library/archival systems and their clients. Traditionally it has been the role of the cataloguer to create the descriptive records by manually transcribing the data from each item. The data are enhanced with standardized access points resulting in descriptive records for the catalogue. Emerging technology encompasses a wide variety of metadata from various sources: from user-tagged images in Flickr, to the ID3 tag within MP3 files, or to the metadata created by publishers for their business supply chain.



Given the increase of print and digital materials available, there are greater demands on the processes of resource description. More items and new formats demand that a fresh approach is needed for the creation of descriptions. One approach is to make use of externally produced metadata to provide a basic descriptive record. By repurposing existing metadata and eliminating redundancies of effort, LAC can focus on authority work, subject analysis, and classification—the enhancements that add value to description. Accurate metadata and high-quality description will assist Canadians in their desire to discover pertinent resources from their documentary heritage.

### ***3. Opportunities***

Library and Archives Canada serves Canadians by acquiring, preserving, and providing access to all kinds of information. In order for Canadians to gain access to this information, materials must be well described with standardized name and subject access points, and relevant classification provided. Resource description, sharing metadata, and enhancing it, is the backbone of resource discovery. Today, LAC can take advantage of existing, external sources of metadata to eliminate redundancies and to create efficient work flows. LAC has the opportunity to foster collaborations in the form of consortia, public and private partnerships, or among government agencies and professional communities. LAC is pursuing collaborations with institutions or organizations that are better able to perform certain business services and that allow LAC to hone its specific strengths in data enrichment.

Your feedback on how LAC can best focus its resource description activities to more fully support resource discovery and sharing is appreciated.

### ***4. Exploratory project: Repurposing outside metadata***

While many projects present themselves, LAC selected one manageable project to explore and advance LAC's ability to ingest and repurpose metadata produced by publishers about their publications. Publication metadata is available and transferable in an electronic format early in the business supply chain as publishers produce metadata for their business operations to create online catalogues, for e-marketing and advertising, to populate websites, and to monitor their inventory and other trade considerations. Publishers use ONIX (Online Information Exchange) formatted metadata, an XML-based industry standard. According to Booknet Canada, 76 percent of Canadian publishers send ONIX files to supply chain partners. A number of organizations, such as the Library of Congress and OCLC, are seeking to take advantage of this data earlier in their work flows.

While it is true that both publishers and libraries create their own metadata in independent silos, one of their main goals is the same: resource discovery. Rather than duplicating effort, LAC can share and enrich its data more collaboratively to effectively serve Canadians.



This exploratory project will provide an opportunity to test crosswalks from ONIX to MARC21 and the automated transfer of publisher-supplied metadata into the LAC resource description workflow. This work will enable LAC to assess the value and usefulness of upstream-supplied metadata and perhaps discover additional information that can be extracted from the ONIX data not normally provided in MARC records.

LAC hopes to partner with Booknet Canada as a single-source from which to receive publisher-supplied metadata for English publications. Potential sources of French-language publication metadata including BLTF and ANEL will be explored. Booknet Canada is a not-for-profit agency responsible for driving technology innovation for Canadian publishers, distributors, and booksellers. They offer ONIX metadata certification to enable publishers to meet the rigorous standards of book industry sales needs. With Booknet Canada's planned metadata warehouse, called BiblioShare, publishers will be able to drop off full ONIX records and share them with data aggregators. ONIX data would be automatically ingested into AMICUS and form a basic catalogue record, ready for LAC enhancement.

## ***5. Learning Objectives***

LAC hopes to gain an understanding of its technological capacity to import and transform external metadata especially with regard to resource discovery. LAC plans to inform and improve its internal work processes by employing newly available sources of data. This is a first step in modernizing the internal systems and workflows in resource description. LAC hopes to foster and continue relationships with the metadata community, and pursue collaborative partnerships in the publisher supply chain. Please share your thoughts on these plans and any ideas you may have to guide LAC forward in its resource description activities.

## ***6. Conclusion***

The final report in March 2010, will describe the results obtained by the implementation of the project described in this document and will be used to achieve the objectives of Library and Archives Canada (LAC) in two respects. On the one hand, each of the eight pathfinder projects will produce operational specific deliverables, which will develop approaches and practices of LAC in respect of certain specific activity areas. On the other hand, the lessons learned during the implementation of each pathfinder project, in the context of the four guiding principles and the key roles, feed the LAC approach to the acquisition, preservation, and the resource discovery of Canada's documentary heritage. Your comments and feedback on this discussion paper will support the modernization work of LAC, as it prepares to revise its approach to meet the challenges of the digital environment in order to continue fulfilling its mandate, and thus better serve Canadians.