

Unisys Case Study

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Unisys is somewhat primitive in its understanding of metadata but it is gradually getting better through its KM initiatives. Dublin Core is not enforced as a standard but it is presented to all new communities in the meta-modeling stage of Community design. This provides the opportunity to explain the advantages of more detailed metadata, but the communities are often less interested in the "standardisation" and more focused on using their own terminology for the labels and descriptions. Unisys is now starting to understand the need for a common metadata standard. They are being driven towards using Dublin Core and they seem happy about that.

Dublin Core is used in the SharePoint portal. A few elements are used on the Intranet HTML content and Internet content management systems. What has not been done is to encode Dublin Core elements into the XML schema's back end. Instead, labels are used on fields in metadata forms. The intention is to move to a formalised schema. This is part of the Knowledge Management strategy for the next 3 years.

Attributes and their details are maintained on a spreadsheet that has recently been uploaded as a portal list. All portal users can suggest metadata and it enters the change control process. There are meta-models that enable the allocation of the ownership of groups of similar attributes to teams who use the metadata.

Controlled vocabularies are being used to fill in metadata. The portal design teams define the metadata forms, and embed the controlled vocabularies in the drop-down menus. Unisys have been unable to automatically populate the lists of controlled vocabularies. MultiTees is used to manage the controlled vocabularies and export them into HTML so that community administrators can access them easily. Text files of the controlled vocabularies are also provided for system administrators to cut and paste into the forms. Change control is an issue with this method. Unisys are also unable to use hierarchical vocabularies.

Subject is the most difficult element to use. Unisys always end up with subject.something. There are design issues for the presentation of the names of the metadata on user interfaces where space is valuable. Sometimes the subject prefix is lost. This can be very costly in usability terms.