An irreverent look at the history of the Dublin Core

(what we did well, what we did not so well, and what is suggests we do in the future)

DC-2010
Pittsburgh
October 21, 2010

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An Abbreviated timeline of the Dublin Core

1994	• 13 elements
	• 15 (the slippery slope begins)
	• Dumb Down principle (Refine, not broaden)
	• One to one principle (Ranganathan Reborn)
1997	• Qualifiers: element refinements and encoding schemes) (slipperier yet)
1999	• Governance and organization
2000	• Application profiles
2001	• Standardization
	• Workshops become conferences
	• Data models, always data models
	• The tarpits of syntax reconciliation
2007	• DC Abstract Model
2008	• DCMI is independent

Why didn't we just stop?

We thought we needed more
We thought we could solve the syntax issues
Self-perpetuation of groups

Things actually do need maintenance
But how to scale the maintenance and evolution to institutional and community needs? (still a problem)

Management and Governance: How did we do?

Being International (A)
Being inclusive (B+)
Being solvent (D)

Moving from consensus to completion (C)

Establishing objectives, and completing them in a timely fashion (C-)

Documentation of decisions (B+)

Tarpits: places we got stuck

Tarpits of our own making

- Data Models (F)
- Syntax confusion (C-, but it wasn't our fault)
  - HTML
  - XML
  - RDF

Tarpits of other people's making

- LOM
- INDECs

The Dilemma of Cooperation

Cooperation is important

- promote convergeance
- adopt similar models
- adopt related technologies, amplifying the Network Effect

Cooperation is expensive

- in time and travel
- coordination of efforts
- achieving common understanding
- reaching consensus

You can't always count on good faith efforts

Standardization (A)

- IETF: easy sleight of hand
- NISO: really hard and full of politics -- DC was the first fast track standard developed in NISO.
- ISO: Pro Forma, due to our success at the NISO effort

A very important part of adoption patterns: the imprimatur of a formal standards process is essential for adoption by governmental agencies, and important for commercial adoption.

Singapore Framework:
Levels of Interoperability (Grades still out)

You think you know what I thought I meant interoperability

Informal: users think they agree on the meaning of elements, and share values as human readable strings. Machines need not apply. 99% of all metadata lives here...sigh

Flexibility and one-size-confuses-all interoperability

Semantic: A collection of RDF assertions which do not necessarily share a larger structural framework attendant to an actual data model (see *Linked Data*). An aspirational target of great promise and unproven benefit

Singapore Framework Interoperability

WTF?!? interoperability

Conformance to the Dublin Core Abstract Model
The *AUTHORS* of this document don't even agree about its motivations or implications. The only institutions with the wherewithal to achieve such close coordination, mostly already have frameworks of their own

If I Were King Interoperability

Framework Interoperability
agreement on every aspect of models, frameworks, requirements, application profiles, vocabularies....
good luck with that

Data Models (F)

We don't do this well (nobody really does)

Contentious from the start

The DC Abstract Model was intended to provide a basis for a shared understanding

It failed

The Data Model is the Web
Don't deviate from it

Flexibility versus constraints: We mostly are drawn in by the Siren Call of Flexibility, but would be better off with more constraints

DCMI was the primary intended consumer of the W3C effort to create a metadata architecture for the web (RDF)

The naive techies vastly over-rated the ease and speed of adoption (remember the Finnish Finish?)

RDF remains an aspirational technology

Linked Data: The Web, recast

The ***New Grail***, (which looks a lot like the old grail, but we really mean it this time -- that stuff about identifiers and links!)

- commitment to identifiers
- some conventions about vocabularies and syntax,
- some tools to build ontologies and models
- and some expectations of utility due to broad adoption - network benefits

But...:

- Can data quality be maintained?
- Will people deploy useful metadata to be useful?
- Can boundaries between semantic communities bridged?

Hot off the Twittersphere: Andy Powell at JISC RSC 2010

"if we don't mobilize metadata then we won't maximise efficiencies around research data" - hall at #jiscres10

"we are now swamped by so much data that we constantly battle to know what to do with it" - hall at #jiscres10

"data isn't re-usable because metadata is so poor - and that applies to my own data" - comment from floor at #jiscres10

And the punchline is...

Question: how do we incentivize good data management?

Answer: simple... demonstrate impact (which is what researchers want anyway)

(Also from Andypowe11 #jiscres10)

Dumb Data is Dead Data

The scale and speed of [technology] transformation virtually guarantees that any computer applications and user interfaces we use today will at some point, probably soon, be superseded.

Data that cannot speak for itself will be more vulnerable to becoming irrelevant.

Tom Baker
(in a note to the Library Linked Data Public Mailing List)

DCMI is an ongoing experiment in Social Engineering

- Creating Community
- Developing Consensus
- Establishing Common goals

Much of the community that began the effort is still connected

Strong Ties and Weak Ties

Malcom Gladwell
The New Yorker, October 4, 2010
Small Chang:
Why the revolution will not be twittered

Social media are largely broadly disseminated, networked, *weak tie* activities. Access to information. Low barriers, low committment, low persistence.

Systemic change requires strong tie, hierarchical social structures. Leadership, organization, face to face work.

15 years of change

The Dublin Core is a *strong tie* phenomenon begun by a few people with passions about resource discovery.

We have created a community around an obscure but critical discussion: how to describe web resources so they can be managed and found more effectivey

DC 2010 is the latest venture in an evolving mission

Be social

Nurture strong ties

Be productive

(and thank you for coming)