Metadata Dictionary for Public Broadcasting
Phase 4, CPB Contract #7304
Intellectual Property White Paper (Deliverable #3c)
Submitted by WGBH Educational Foundation, December 20, 2004

This paper addresses the strategic, ethical and legal use of PBCore, a shared metadata standard for public broadcasting

Strategic Use

The value of PBCore is underscored in its ability to advance public broadcasting's mission to deliver content to the American people. PBCore serves this mission in a variety of ways, to: enhance the searching and retrieval of content; extend program production and public service partnership capacities; increase the editorial value of content; and support the development of innovative digital content and services.

PBCore directly addresses and supports public broadcasting's need to realize operational savings; and, additionally, it affords new opportunities to generate income derived from the use of public broadcasting's content assets.

PBCore has potential value beyond public broadcasting; organizations worldwide have indicated interest in using PBCore, from which public broadcasting is likely to benefit. As opposed to other commodities or intellectual property, standards increase in value as they become ubiquitous, rather than scarce.

Of importance to note is that public broadcasting benefited from creating the PBCore standard in a collaborative, open source-like community of potential users. All standards work, by its nature, happens in a collaborative framework.

We know that benefits of PBCore use accrue individually and collectively; it expands horizons by allowing everyone in an industry to tap into each other's resources for whatever mission or financial reasons they want. PBCore is analogous to the PBS Technical Operating Standards (TOS), which were created for PBS but are in fact used by the entire TV industry as the de facto standard.

A public broadcasting metadata dictionary has strategic value for vendors (i.e. traffic and automation) who routinely work with public broadcasters. Much of the software used in the media industry uses data about our content (i.e. sponsorship, editing, automation, fundraising, etc.), and a whole suite of vendors creating many types of software will benefit from compliance with a public broadcasting metadata dictionary. As with content partners, benefits accrue individually and collectively; stations will benefit from having PBCore-compliant software, vendors will benefit from the opportunity to continue to serve the needs of their customer bases, and all will benefit from PBCore's ubiquitous use.

Ethical Use

To the degree that PBCore, and the public broadcasting content it is intended to describe, were created with public money, the public should derive the maximum value from them. As public broadcasters, PBCore helps us operationalize our responsibility to deliver the highest public benefit from the editorial assets we create and distribute.

PBCore was created as a joint effort by a cross-organizational, cross-disciplinary Working Group, which was comprised of local and national public broadcasting staff, as well as subject matter experts from the academic community. Participating organizations have contributed not only in-kind staff time, but in numerous instances, substantial previous metadata work. Again, the development of this standard reflects the collaborative framework and spirit whereby work was created by many, for use by all. The PBCore is inspired by, and informed by Dublin Core; in fact, DCMI (The Dublin Core Metadata Initiative) asked us to use these words in reference to PBCore: "The PBCore is built on the foundation of the Dublin Core (ISO 15836), an international standard for resource discovery <http://dublincore.org>, and has been reviewed by the Dublin Core Metadata Initiative Usage Board." The advocacy and use of this language underscores the validity of work being developed and adopted that is inspired by others' thinking.

We want to strike a balance between encouraging PBCore's use and adoption, and protecting its integrity and value as a protocol.

Legal Use

Like any other standard, it is in the best interest of the users if PBCore is not significantly altered, corrupted, or abridged; otherwise its value will be lessened, and its effectiveness diminished. For example, elements of PBCore that are listed as mandatory must be present and used in any implementation for that use to be considered PBCore-compliant.

Similarly, while the value of PBCore can and should be enhanced and extended by its user community, there must be some certainty that any re-use, distribution or transformation of PBCore is subject to acceptable terms and conditions. Any extension or derivative work must be offered back to the PBCore community, in the same collaborative framework in which PBCore was developed, without commercial exploitation. Therefore, we believe the best way to maximize the value and protect the integrity of the PBCore is to copyright it, and license its use at no cost.

At the May 2004 Compliance-Sustainability Meeting, it was determined not to be necessary to form a separate entity to manage PBCore's implementation and sustained development. Therefore, no other natural party exists other than CPB to hold the copyright; CPB sponsored PBCore's development and is the only organization whose interests span all of public media. In order for CPB to own the copyright, its contributors need to grant non-exclusive rights to CPB for the work they contributed to the PBCore.

A very good resource on these licensing issues can be found on the Creative Commons website, <http://creativecommons.org/license/>, which provides templates for a variety of licensing approaches offered by both Creative Commons and the Free Software Foundation's GNU General Public License (GPL).