PBCore (Public Broadcasting Metadata Dictionary) Test Implementation Complete; Launch Imminent

The inaugural version of PBCore (Public Broadcasting Metadata Dictionary), a standard way to describe all public broadcasting content, has emerged from the Test Implementation phase and is being finalized for the launch of version 1.0 in September 2004. Under development since January 2002, PBCore is the result of unprecedented cross-organizational cooperation by a team of public radio and television producers and managers, archivists and information scientists.

A common metadata protocol is fundamental to public broadcasting's ability to work in collaborative environments to deliver and exchange content across new digital distribution platforms. PBCore will enable more efficient and cost-effective ways to leverage content and service partnerships to serve existing and new constituents. PBCore will facilitate new production collaborations and the ability to parse traditional programs into short segments for Web distribution or as niche content for specific community, service and institutional needs. For these applications where granular manipulation and interoperability are required, PBCore will be essential.

In May, PBCore was deployed in three test scenarios to determine:

1. its effectiveness when used as a data inter-operability/translation tool;
2. if PBCore can be used to initiate a digitizing/archiving process and assess its ability to assist in asset or record discovery; and
3. to map PBCore to several emerging metadata standards.

Participants included public television station and national producer WGBH, public radio station and national producer Minnesota Public Radio, national public broadcasting distributors PBS and National Public Radio, local station Kentucky Educational Television, and recognized metadata expert Grace Agnew.

The tests were completed successfully and highlighted areas for further refinement. In response to consistent feedback to make metadata standards easy to use, the number of PBCore metadata elements has been reduced. Also, efforts are underway to provide more PBCore examples that are specific to television and radio.

The need for a shared descriptive language for public broadcasters was underscored in the results of the test implementations, as well as the March 2004 Request for Comments. Ninety-six percent of the RFC respondents agreed "public broadcasting needs a core metadata dictionary" and that PBCore meets this need. In addition, 44 percent of participants plan to implement a metadata project within the next year, and 74 percent within the next two years. Respondents indicated the use of PBCore would provide public broadcasting with a necessary tool for increasing station and network efficiencies and inter-station resource sharing. And 80 percent agreed the use of PBCore could afford new service opportunities for their organization or those with whom they work.

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. Version 1.0 of PBCore will be published in September 2004. It is anticipated that PBCore will be available free of charge.

A summary of the Test Implementation results, version 1.0 of PBCore (once published), a User Guide with an orientation to understanding PBCore elements, presentations, background articles, and resources are available at http://www.utah.edu/cpbmetadata/.

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