Library Standards and Protocols

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A library standard is a common and repeated use of rules, conditions, guidelines or characteristics for products or related processes (NISO/ALCTS Webinar, 28). They are a set of specifications that provide interchangeability and portability of files and networking architectures from one system to another (Cohn, Kelsey, Fiels, 179). Standards are necessary in order to facilitate and provide guidance so that libraries can realize their full potential, ensure consistent and faster access to information, make it easier for people with special needs to use digital information, help with transitioning into new technologies, and provide the basis for search engines to do a better job of indexing sites. Furthermore, the process of establishing standards works to be open to future improvement and aware of past technology (NISO/ALCTS Webinar, 37).

A *Performance Standard* describes how a product is supposed to function. A *Design Standard* defines characteristics or how the product is to be built (NISO/ALCTS Webinar, 36). Categories for standards in libraries include *local standards* that are created by your local library; *state standards* developed by your state agencies; *national standards* established by federal government agencies; *international standards* formed through a consensus-based process (NISO/ALCTS Webinar, 32).

Purpose-Based Standards include, but are not limited to, *basic standards* with a broad ranging effect in a particular field; *terminology standards* which define words in order to provide a common and understood language for an industry and/or group; *test and measurement standards* which define methods to be used to assessment of performance or characteristics of a product or process; *product standards* which establish qualities or requirements for a product or related group of products; *process standards* which specify requirements to be met by a process;

service standards which establish requirements to be met in order to achieve the designated purpose effectively; *interface standards* which are concerned with the compatibility of products; *standards on data* which contain lists of characteristics for which values or other data are to be stated for specifying the product, process or service (NISO/ALCTS Webinar, 33).

Intended User-Group Standards are *company standards* meant for use by a single organization; *international standards* by international governmental and non-governmental organizations; *harmonized standards* developed as either an attempt by a country to make its standard compatible with an international, regional or other standard or can be an agreement by two or more nations on the content and application of a standard; *industry standards* developed and promulgated by an industry for materials and products related to that industry; *government standards* developed and promulgated by Federal, State, and local agencies to address needs or applications peculiar to their missions and functions (NISO/ALCTS Webinar, 35).

Although it is apparent that the term "standard" can apply to many facets of an organization, business, or industry, for this class I believe the focus is on library systems and automation. A mandatory purpose of systems is that they should be able to interface with each other. According to Cohn, Kelsey, and Fiels, the library profession has recognized standards for bibliographic data and formats, item and transaction formats, cabling and networking of hardware, information transfer, textual data, image, CD-ROM, and multimedia files, and e-books. The national and international organizations that are charged with accepting proposals and approving standards are the International Standards Organization (ISO), the National Information Standards Organization (NISO [Z39]), the American National Standards Institute (ANSI), the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE), , the Telecommunications

Industries Association (TIA), the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF), and the Electronic Industry Association (EIA).

MARC (MAchine Readable Cataloging) is an example of an important standard used in libraries in order to create machine readable bibliographic files from paper files in order to read, store, and process files using a computer. The Library of Congress created MARC in the 1960s and has transitioned to MARC21 after the merging of USMARC of the United States and CANMARC of Canada. It is imperative to use a standard that is compatible with most library automation systems and MARC21 has provided that compatibility. Transportability and availability are major concerns when automating a library and MARC21 provides both.

The one area that MARC21 falls short is in the area of cataloging the web as it doesn't describe electronic resource content or archival finding aids well (Cohn, Kelsey, Fiels, 174). Dublin Core through the OCLC (Online Computer Library Center) and NCSA (National Center for Supercomputing Applications) is working towards better and standardized search and retrieval of Web-based resources.

In implementing a library system, standards must be considered beforehand. When dealing with vendors, a RFP (Request for Proposal) is used as part of the procurement process in order to establish standards. Specific standards recognized when establishing library systems are bibliographic format and data element standards, item format standards, transaction format standards, cabling and networking of hardware standards, information transfer standards, textual, image, multimedia, and CD-ROM file standards, and e-book standards. "Standards are your first line of defense against incompatibility between and among systems. Their importance cannot be overemphasized (Cohn, Kelsey, Fiels, 187)."

Works Cited

Davis, T.L. and Gammon, J. (2008). *Demystifying library standards.* NISO/ALCTS Webinar. http://www.niso.org/news/events/2008/webinars/alcts08/nisoalcts.pdf (accessed October 2, 2008).

Cohn, J.M., Kelsey, A.L., Fiels, K.M. (2001). A how-to-do-it manual for librarians: Planning for integrated systems and technologies. New York: Neal-Schuman Publishers, Inc.