

TO: Core Board of Directors

TOPIC: Endorsement of Joint Statement on the Metadata Rights of Libraries

ACTION / INFORMATION / REPORT: ACTION / INFORMATION / REPORT (pick one)

ACTION REQUESTED BY: Amber Billey, M&C Leadership Team Chair and Morag Boyd, Advocacy Coordination Committee Chair

SUBMITTED: June 8, 2023

SUMMARY

The Metadata & Collection Section seeks the endorsement of the [Joint Statement on the Metadata Rights of Libraries](#) by the Core Board and therefore the Core Division of the American Library Association.

The key thesis of the statement is

...all organizations, whether for-profit or not-for-profit, to uphold libraries' rights and interests to use, re-use, adapt, aggregate, and share metadata that describes library collections to serve the public interest, without restriction or limitation.

BACKGROUND

The full text of the statement follows:

Metadata and the metadata services that describe library collections are critical in supporting content discovery, knowledge creation, and libraries' public missions. Metadata describing library collections is not typically copyrightable, and should be considered freely shareable and reusable under most circumstances.

"Metadata" is a term without a static definition in law, but it is generally accepted that "metadata" is factual data about data.

Library bibliographic metadata typically provides a factual description of the content and collections that libraries make available to their users. For example: bibliographic records may contain a book's title, author, publication year, subject headings, and other fields. This metadata may vary in its comprehensiveness and descriptiveness, but is not typically considered a creative expression.

Libraries have long created metadata about their collections with the explicit intent that it be shared, re-used, and modified openly in an unrestricted manner to promote access to information. Metadata that describes library collections is core to libraries' non-profit, educational missions in how they function, both day-to-day and strategically. It enables users to discover and access library materials, supports collaboration among libraries,

aids in stewardship of informed library purchasing decisions, allows libraries to observe regional and world-wide metadata use trends, and supports analyzing cataloging trends and conventions.

Given how important it is for libraries to use, re-use, and share such metadata freely, current industry trends are troubling. Limited choice in affordable metadata service options, along with restrictions imposed on metadata use, re-use, and sharing across collaborations, platforms, system types, and providers, are impeding libraries' rights and ability to innovate and collaborate to serve their users effectively. Market-limiting pressure that allows for and enforces any monopolistic practices, whether through commercial contracts or policy, is antithetical to libraries' purpose and marginalizes underfunded libraries.

The statement was original drafted by the International Coalition of Library Consortia (ICOLC), and has been widely discussed in the field. There have been revisions over time, and the current statement is endorsed by important organizations including the Core Metadata & Collections section.

The Core Board asked Advocacy Coordination Committee to review this request. The committee supports the intent of the position and recommends endorsement, largely based on the recommendation of the expert community within Core. It was noted that Indigenous knowledge may need special consideration; for example, Canadian libraries are committed to [OCAP Principles](#) that center Indigenous ownership of their cultural knowledge, data, and information.

ACTION REQUESTED

Endorsement of the Joint Statement on the Metadata Rights of Libraries by the Core Board and therefore the Core Division of the American Library Association.