Two Paths for Metadata Translation: An Overview

A. Our involvement in metadata translation
1. Streamlining or modernizing production processes.
2. Developing a generalizable system for metadata translation.
3. Developing and promoting standards.

B. The lightweight translation path
This is a publicly available service that uses published standards and crosswalks. All processing is done in XML. We expect that the lightweight translation path will encode relatively loose standards for equivalence and round-trip translation. But it remains to be seen whether these standards are adequate for minimally useful levels of interoperability.

The lightweight translation path is motivated by the following arguments:

1. It represents the best-case scenario.
2. As an XML solution, it complements the work of our colleagues on OAI harvesting, SRU/SRW searching, and enhancements to DSpace.
3. It promotes standardization and identifies barriers to progress.

C. The heavyweight translation path
It works with published standards but may have local or proprietary enhancements. The goal is a high-quality and possibly complete translation of records. Our implementation is a custom application that generalizes some of the functionality in OCLC's production systems.

This translation path is motivated by the following arguments:

1. Not enough metadata is in XML. Not enough players have expertise in the XML family of tools.
2. There is too much variation in the records, both XML and non-XML. A lightweight system can't cope without lots of special processing.
3. The XML/XSLT standard is unsuited to the task of fine-grained translation and transformation. Special handling is required to generate production-quality records.
4. The human-supplied semantics of the mappings is lost and can't be re-used in pure stylesheet transformations.