Susanne Dobratz, Wednesday, 26 June 2002

Michael Nelsons Talk on the release of version 2.0 of the OAI protocol

During the starting session of the workshop Michael Nelson (Old Dominion University, USA) from the OAI technical committee gave an overview of the changes and developments made with the release of version 2.0 of the OAI protocol. Although OAI2.0 is based on previous versions, it is not backwards compatible with 1.1. But there will be a migration schedule, allowing repositories to migrate to the new version until the end of 2002. This was nessecary to make versin 2.0 stable for future developments.

He pointed out, that the OAI-PMH is still a unite consisting of Six Verbs (protocol requests based upon the http- protocol) and Dublin Core as major metadata exchange format. Some incremental improvements have been made to the protocol, which are the following ones:
- a single XML schema is used to parse and validate the OAI data,
- some ambiguities within the protocol were removed,
- it now contains of more expressive options and
- has a cleaner separation of roles & responsibilities for data and service providers.

Some new functionalities are to be found in version 2.0, e.g. the identify-requests now contains more information about the data provider and the administration, the header of a metadata set contains informations of the membership to several "subjects" sets, the introduction of a friends-container, that shall help to discover new repositories that are alike the one, that is been searched at the time.

After going into some details of the new defined set definitions, error codes, the possibility to encode provenance information within the metadata set, Michael Nelson talked about the alpha and beta time schedule and phase. Some European activists took part in the alpha test in addition to US American testers, like The British Library, Cornell U. -- NSDL project & e-print arXiv, Ex Libris, FS Consulting Inc -- harvester for my.OAI, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, InQuirion Pty Ltd, RMIT University, Library of Congress, NASA and OCLC.

All in all the OAI has about 77 registered repositories in May 2002, they expect the number to grow immensely in future and hope that the OAI-PMH will develop like the HTTP-protocol.