Work Item Title: Revisions to NISO RP-19-2014 Open Discovery Initiative: Promoting Transparency in Discovery

Background and Problem Statement:

After 4 years, the stated scope of the original ODI Recommended Practice “to facilitate progress through exploration of relevant issues and the development of recommended practices for the current generation of library discovery services based on centrally indexed search” remains accurate. However, developments in the library discovery and publishing ecosystem and technology landscape require new focused investigation and potential expansion of the recommended practice. These potential revisions will ensure that the needs of all stakeholder groups (libraries, content providers, and discovery providers) are met.

The proposed scope of the statement of work results from feedback on the recommended practice received since the 2014 Recommended Practice (RP-19-2014) was released as well as information gathering processes, including the recent surveys noted below, executed by the Open Discovery Initiative Standing Committee (ODI SC) in 2017 and 2018. The topics were reviewed and prioritized by the Standing Committee via a voting process. Each topic requires further information gathering, analysis, and review to ensure that recommendations are within the scope of the ODI purview and feasible for adoption by the larger community.

Statement of Work:

Library Responsibilities in ODI

The ODI SC would like to investigate the feasibility of creating a conformance checklist for libraries. While content providers and discovery service providers are already taking specific measures to assert their conformance with NISO RP-19-2014, library obligations are notably missing. Content providers and discovery service providers with the best intentions will fall short of providing the best possible service unless librarians also commit to correctly configuring their discovery service and set appropriate expectations amongst patrons. Librarians’ actions directly impact other stakeholders’ returns on investments and thus the degree to which they choose to participate in discovery. The librarian role in the ecosystem is not currently addressed in the RP and should be considered in this round of revisions.

Handling of Open Access Content Including Hybrid OA Content

Many institutions and their constituencies are interested in being able to more easily identify open access content including materials found in institutional repositories and open education resources. Though the RP mentions (in 1.1.1 Purpose) that ODI is interested in all content, “regardless of business model for acquisition or the type of license,” it nevertheless is of interest to the three stakeholders of ODI, perhaps in particular to libraries, to work together to further expose open access content to users.

Furthermore, increased discoverability of open access content not only helps users to locate resources that might have otherwise been unavailable to them, but also advances the initiatives that many in leadership within academic institutions have put forward to not only promote open access but also to look for ways to shift away from high cost and highly restrictive content purchased from collections budgets.

We would, therefore, like to consider how content providers and discovery service providers can cooperate to improve the discoverability of open access materials within the discovery service interface.
More Meaningful Usage Statistics for Content Providers

Section 3.3.4.1.1 of the Recommended Practice outlined usage metrics that discovery providers could take to provide to content providers. However, content providers have requested more informative usage reports from discovery service providers to support their investment in feeds to discovery services and to understand how discovery impacts customer use of their databases.

The RP, both in section 3.3.4.1.1 and in the recommended next steps, suggests that more complex metrics and work with COUNTER be considered. ODI did work with COUNTER several years ago to create usage reports for content providers. However, these reports were included as an optional recommendation and have gained little traction.

We would like to revisit these reports, updating them to conform to COUNTER’s current metrics and making sure they meet the needs of content providers while not overburdening discovery services. Once the reports have been updated, we will work with COUNTER again to add the reports to their code of practice (likely again as optional), and we would then like to recommend taking these reports onboard within the ODI RP.

Fair Linking

In this portion of the work item, ODI SC will investigate whether the inclusion of custom proprietary links to specific content platforms may discriminate against offering links to multiple content platforms or introduce linking bias. If discriminatory links were found, that practice would not be in line with 3.3.2.2 of the Recommended Practice. OpenURL linking does support direct identifier linking, which can be as reliable as custom proprietary links. This work item will differentiate between the two concepts and promote use of identifier linking with OpenURL for more stable links along with continued support of metadata based OpenURL linking if no identifier is available.

In addition, the committee will continue to review a list of potential concerns related to custom proprietary linking that may need to be communicated to other stakeholders in NISO:

- **Linking problems/dead ends based on coverage.** In a discovery platform, if custom proprietary linking is turned on for a particular vendor and the user finds a citation and clicks on the link but the library has access through a different platform, the user would be led to a paywall instead of to a URL resolver/correct platform for access.
- **Risk to OpenURL maintenance.** Will vendors, over time, stop providing the knowledge base data needed to support OpenURL access or deprecate supporting the resolution functions in their platforms out of preference for custom proprietary linking? Many libraries continue to see significant linking traffic from sources outside of discovery systems.
- **Linking bias.** Earlier on in ODI discussions, concerns about potential linking bias were heavily discussed. Is custom proprietary linking a way for potential bias to occur, based on custom proprietary linking settings in the discovery layer, versus the settings for preferred platform as determined by the library in the URL resolver system? Would publishers/platforms not able to provide direct links be penalized in some way?
- **Closed format.** Custom proprietary links are not parseable or usable without the active
participation of the vendor that issued them. As “permalink”, they fall short. As tools for moving citation information from system to system they are lacking.

**Identifying the source of the record in the discovery interface**

Metadata for a particular record can be sourced from various resources and providers. Issues may arise for end users, librarians, and content providers when the source is not listed within the the result list or detailed record of the discovery interface or when multiple sources are used to construct a record.

Source identification was a theme in the results of the ODI SC’s A&I survey. Providers of these subject indexes clearly saw their indexing as their asset (not simply a means to get to full text). Because there may be multiple records for a single source of content, content providers might wish to have provider-specific versions of a record. Understanding the pros and cons of such an implementation would need to be understood. Usage statistics at the record level play a role in how providers understand how their records are used in driving users to disparate full text items, and perhaps how they rank against other versions of the same record from other sources (e.g., why/when would one record display over another).

The display of the source of a record may also play a role in allowing users to link to native interfaces/experiences. Linking to external resources has potential value to end-users and libraries as this linking would allow users to discover more from the library at a “resource level” rather than just at an item level.

Investigation into this item should determine the feasibility of providing a source for each record, how this could be accomplished in the event of merging sources, and what impact the source of a record has on related linking (dovetailing into the “Fair Linking” item outlined above).

**Content Coverage Disclosure (Reporting on Discovery Service Content at a Collection Level)**

Content providers and librarians largely regard discovery central indexes as black boxes. For librarians, while it may be possible to know which collections are included and possibly even which titles within those collections are indexed, it is not clear how comprehensive a collection or title is at the article level or whether the records being indexed are of sufficient quality to be surfaced. Libraries invest sizable portions of their budget on discovery services and content and therefore seek increased transparency.

Content providers often have even less access to information as they may not have an instance of the discovery service available to them and do not have a way of knowing whether all of the content they provide to the discovery service is actually being indexed. Records can be dropped and updates can be missed without the content provider’s knowledge, which is rather problematic considering the amount of capital they are investing in these feeds.

In this section of the work item, we will investigate whether the needs of libraries and content providers are being met by the coverage listing requirements outlined in 3.3.1. ODI recommends title level metadata while we believe there may be a need for more granular information. Sections 4.4 & 4.5 suggest exploring requirements for collection level information as well as a lookup tool.

A task force will contact content providers and librarians to better understand their pain points regarding content disclosure as well as discovery service providers to clarify their current methods. The group will then draft recommendations based on this research to improve transparency while minimizing discovery service provider investment.
Identification of Features/Functionality of Discovery Services to Address Needs of A&I Service Providers / Managing “Restricted” Content in Discovery Services

Section 2.2 (Abstracting and Indexing Resources) highlights some of the issues A&I providers confront when deciding whether to participate in a discovery service; including preserving their value and brand, maintaining the customer base, and utilizing their specialized vocabularies, abstracts, or other metadata to support users.

The original RP acknowledged the unique challenges of A&I providers, including two items in Section 4 (Recommended Next Steps).

- Section 4.3 (Managing “Restricted” Content in Discovery Services): A&I providers want assurances that access to their intellectual property is available only to mutual subscribers. In simple terms, a user must be authenticated to see results that include records from an A&I provider. This feature has been implemented by most discovery services. This in and of itself has not seemingly increased participation by A&I providers. A subgroup will examine this item further. Have the existing solutions resolved this concern, or have they created other items for consideration? For example, is the process for confirming mutual subscribers inefficient?

- Section 4.8 (Identification of Features/Functionality of Discovery Services to Address Needs of A&I Service Providers). The title of this section focuses on “features/functionality” of discovery services as relates to A&I provider participation. The subgroup will endeavor to identify current concerns that limit the participation of A&I providers in discovery services. As a starting point, we will draw upon the findings from the A&I Content Provider survey. The subgroup will contact A&I providers to understand the current context within which they are operating; i.e., feedback regarding their current perception of discovery services and thoughts regarding changes that would increase participation.

We will document these findings and draft recommendations for consideration by the ODI SC.

Identification of Additional Metadata and Content Elements

Libraries are continuing to build local expertise and knowledge about how discovery systems are used by researchers at their institutions. This has allowed libraries to evaluate metadata that is critical for successful discovery. Several requests have been sent to ODI to enhance section 3.2.1 (Metadata Elements Provided to Discovery Services) of the recommended practice. This portion of the work item would include reviewing these requests and surveying the larger community to learn of additional potential metadata elements to include in a revision.

Partners and Participation: Open Discovery Initiative Standing Committee, COUNTER library stakeholders, and A&I providers.

Preliminary Timeline:

- Appointment of Working Group or other Participants - ODI, complete
- Approval of Work Plan - 12/2018
- Completion of Information Gathering - 5/2019
- Completion of Initial Draft - 9/2019
● Public Comment Period - 10/2019
● Completion of Final Draft and Publication of Recommended Practice - 1/2020