

# **Introduction to the NISO Pre-Standards Workshop on Digital Rights Expression**

***May 18-19, 2005  
Denver, Colorado***

## **Introduction**

NISO represents the community involved in the delivery and exchange of information for research, teaching, personal enrichment, and lifelong learning. This community includes publishers, aggregators of resources, database creators, educational organizations, libraries, archives, museums, and the vendor community that serves all of these. The institutions in this community have embraced the use of computing both to improve their own management activities and to deliver resources rapidly and over physical distances. The creation and exchange of digital materials in this community surfaces issues of rights expression and management that need our attention to make the transition to the digital age a successful one. The NISO Rights Management workshop has been organized to bring into focus the issues surrounding the expression and management of rights for digital content of concern to its community.

## **The Rights Management Environment Today**

Rights management is not a single standard nor a single technology. There is now an international standard for rights expression languages (ISO/IEC 21000-5:2004<sup>1</sup>) as well as several industry standards<sup>2</sup> in use. In addition there are user access controls used by database vendors, the work of the Internet 2 Middle-ware Initiative on authorization standards,<sup>3</sup> and the OASIS committee work on security and access control<sup>4</sup>. Although some of these are not being developed within the NISO community, all rights technologies that are applied to cultural and research materials have potential impact on the members that purchase, license, or in other ways act on those digital resources. The work done in the development of these standards informs the discussion of rights that we will have at the NISO workshop. In addition, prior work has been done on rights requirements and licensing issues within nearby communities, such as the report of the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC)<sup>5</sup>, the work of the Digital Library Foundation's Electronic Resource Management Initiative (ERMI)<sup>6</sup>, and the work of the IEEE working group on requirements for rights expression languages for learning technologies<sup>7</sup>.

## **Key Issues**

There are many advantages that digital works have over analog materials. Digital materials reduce storage costs, can be rapidly re-packaged for emerging markets, and can be delivered to users who are geographically dispersed with little expense. Once delivered to end-users, digital materials have "affordances" relating to the ease of their re-use and transformation that add potential to the future of research and creativity. To

make full use of these materials certain issues must first be solved. The issues listed below are important to the NISO community members and will be addressed by the workshop.

## **Educational and Research Use**

The educational and research environment is undergoing rapid development relating to the use of digital materials. The needs of actors in this environment will span a wide variety of materials with a great variety of rights and rights technologies. This is an area where the affordances of digital materials have the potential to lead to the development of new knowledge and to educate a new generation of thinkers. Because research makes use of both modern and legacy materials, institutions may need to assign rights and protection to materials that are offered to users from legacy collections. Educational systems need to be able to exercise their rights that are permitted by statutory exemption. Creators in this environment also need ways to assert their authorship and allow use of their materials. Some of the newly-created materials will enter the institutional digital archive, and the rights associated with these need to be effectively managed and conveyed.

## **The Supply Chain**

The appropriate rights must be carried through the supply chain with the digital object. This flow goes from creators and publishers to vendors and aggregators and then to users through institutional interfaces. Institutions need to combine content from multiple sources in a single interface without compromising the rights associated with each object.

## **Interoperability and Security**

There is a need to move digital content across systems while retaining the integrity of copyrights and license terms in the object. For example, libraries and educational institutions endeavor to provide a coherent information picture for users, gathering materials from many different sources into a single service. Digital resources also need to be able to move securely through both library and e-learning systems to end-users, and to move in and out of digital storage systems as needed. For these institutions, interoperability among information resources and systems, including interoperability of rights management is essential.

## **Licensing of Digital Materials**

Libraries and educational institutions are licensing digital materials and services from vendors. Development of agreements between aggregators/vendors and licensees is costly and time consuming. Differences between agreements make it difficult to present a coherent interface for users. Although it isn't possible to create a single license for all situations, model licenses and best practices benefit both vendors and their customers, and facilitate the education of users on rights and usage.

## Digital Life-Cycle

Some NISO member institutions are committed to the long term preservation of the resources that they manage. There is both a need to preserve the physical object and a need to preserve the content that the materials represent. For digital materials, preservation of the content over a long period of time may mean transforming the digital file so that the content can be continually accessed as the rendering technology undergoes change. Rights management technologies could prevent the transformations of format that this preservation requires.

Libraries have special needs relating to the long-term archiving of materials and the need to be able to assure access over time. There are requirements that digital materials purchased by libraries be archived or escrowed as a guarantee against market failures. This requirement in turn points to a need for rights to be understood over time, and for their expression to be included in preservation metadata standards.

## NISO's Role

The main questions for the attendees at the NISO workshop are:

- How can NISO best serve its community in regard to defining and promoting the necessary standards and best practices for rights expression?
- To be most effective, what role should NISO play and where should it invest its resources?

We can expect rights expression and management technologies to evolve over time as materials become increasingly digital in format. The current urgency is to provide guidance for the development of appropriate solutions based on a clear understanding of the needs, requirements, and priorities of the different constituencies in the NISO community.

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<sup>1</sup> Based on MPEG-21. Available at: <http://www.iso.org/>.

<sup>2</sup> In particular, the Open Digital Rights Language (ODRL, at <http://odrl.net>), which is used in some mobile products, and the Adobe PDF format (<http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/>).

<sup>3</sup> See: <http://shibboleth.internet2.edu/>

<sup>4</sup> In particular, two key specifications: Security Assertion Markup Language (SAML) (<http://www.oasis-open.org/committees/security/>) and the eXtensible Access Control Markup Language (XACML) ([http://www.oasis-open.org/committees/tc\\_home.php?wg\\_abbrev=xacml](http://www.oasis-open.org/committees/tc_home.php?wg_abbrev=xacml))

<sup>5</sup> Digital Rights Management, Final Report. Study carried out by Intrallect Ltd on behalf of JISC, 22 November 2004. Available at: <http://www.intrallect.com/drm-study/>

<sup>6</sup> Available through the DLF at: <http://www.diglib.org/standards/dlf-erm02.htm>

<sup>7</sup> See: <http://ltsc.ieee.org/wg4/index.html>