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On the home page of OCLC website, we have a clearly indicated access to WorldCat, probably the most interesting bibliographical resource in the world. But today it is only a bibliographic resource even if the web site is rich with many other resources (Archive Grid, Cultural Material, CAMIO, HandPrintBooks). It is not easy to find them and they are not freely available and governed by the same economic model as the data put in WorldCat. One explanation is probably that these resources come from other organizations (CERL and RLG).

Nevertheless all these resources would be useful to the same people for the same researches. It could be helpful to provide a unique access with a search tool enabling information to be found, for example about a famous man or woman in a book, in an archival fonds or in a museum collection.

This is not an insurmountable issue and not a technical one. RLG proved some years ago that it is possible to search on a core set of metadata common to databases structured in diverse formats. It is also an aim of The European Library (TEL). There are essentially two formats, MARC for bibliographical records and EAD for archival finding aids.

The main difference between a MARC format and EAD relies on the ability of XML - on which EAD is based- to structure the information in detail. It is the reason why it is used to describe archival fonds.

Thus it is necessary to use a light XML set of metadata compliant with a part of the MARC fields and the EAD elements and attributes. Some sets already exist. It could be the DublinCore, not the minimal set but the set built for the libraries containing 18 elements and attributes for qualifying them. The main quality of this set is its ability to express a hierarchy and its context. TEL is based on it. Its usability for our purpose must be checked.

To this core set, it is necessary to add at least two specific elements, one to indicate the provenance of the data and one to handle the status of their reading ("public" or "private" to allow or not a free access to it). In the DublinCore, we could express the location of the object described and the rights ruling the communication of this object. But for our purpose it is probably also necessary to give information about the data themselves (from which database they come, are they freely available or with an ID ?).

Once the results are obtained, the readers clicking on one item would be directed to the complete bibliographic or archival or museum record and would be allowed to navigate in the rest of the data. This is specially required for the archival records which are always related to others inside a fonds.

Of course on the first search screen, it would be possible to select only one or several databases in which one wants to do the search. It would be possible also to identify oneself to get access to the non-public part of the descriptions. All the restrictions must be handled by only one ID system and not different for each database.

Furthermore, WorldCat would be converted into a real portal and would offer a simplified and more efficient tool to the reader. Such a portal will be attractive for many new readers as for example genealogists, amateur historians and so on.