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NISO Publishes Recommended Practice and Technical Report on Improving OpenURLs Through Analytics

NISO has published a new recommended practice, *Improving OpenURLs Through Analytics (IOTA): Recommendations for Link Resolver Providers* (NISO RP-21-2013). These recommendations are the result of a three-year study performed by the NISO IOTA Working Group in which millions of OpenURLs were analyzed and a Completeness Index was developed as a means of quantifying OpenURL quality. By applying this Completeness Index to their OpenURL data and following the recommendations, providers of link resolvers can monitor the quality of their OpenURLs and work with content providers to improve the provided metadata—ultimately resulting in a higher success rate for end users. The project is summarized in a technical report, *IOTA Working Group Summary of Activities and Outcomes* (NISO TR-05-2013), which was published along with the recommended practice.

OpenURLs are context-sensitive URLs widely used by publishers and libraries to allow end users to connect to the full-text of e-resources discovered during a search. To ensure that the user accesses the most appropriate copy of a resource (one that is preferably free to the user due to a subscription through the user's library), the OpenURL link connects to a link resolver knowledgebase. The metadata embedded within the OpenURL is compared through the link resolver with what is held in or licensed through the library and the end user is then presented with the available full-text access options. At a typical academic library, thousands of OpenURL requests are initiated by patrons each week. The problem is that too often these links do not work as expected because the metadata in the OpenURL is incorrect or incomplete, leaving users unable to access the resources they need.

Through its analysis, the IOTA Working Group, chaired by Adam Chandler, Electronic Resources User Experience Librarian at Cornell University Library, found that there was a pattern to the failures in OpenURLs. The Completeness

Index was developed as a method of predicting the success of OpenURLs from a given provider by examining the data elements that provider includes in the OpenURLs from its site. This metric can serve as a tool to help determine which content providers are more likely to cause linking problems due to missing data elements in their OpenURLs and can identify exactly what the problems are. The Recommended Practice explains how to implement the measures so that problems can be clearly identified and steps taken with the content providers to improve the quality of the metadata.

The IOTA Recommended Practice is a perfect complement to the NISO/UKSG KBART Recommended Practice (NISO RP-9-2010). While KBART recommends how to improve the data within the link resolver knowledgebase, IOTA is focused on the metadata passed in the OpenURL itself. Together, these recommendations can ensure that OpenURLs will consistently provide the results that libraries, publishers, and end users have come to expect from this technology.

The IOTA Recommended Practice and Technical Report are both available for free download from the IOTA Working Group's page on the NISO website at: www.niso.org/workrooms/openurlquality.

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