METS — Metadata Encoding & Transmission Standard

METS is a generalized metadata framework, developed to encode the structural metadata for objects within a digital library and related descriptive and administrative metadata. Launched by the Digital Library Federation, the METS initiative seeks to provide a single, standard mechanism for encoding all forms of metadata for digital library objects. METS will simplify both the exchange of objects between repositories and the development of software tools for search and display of those objects. Additionally, METS encoding will provide a coherent means for archiving digital objects and their metadata. The METS initiative has two major components, a technical one aimed at developing a standard encoding format for metadata, and an organizational one aimed at developing mechanisms for maintenance and further development of the format.

The technical component of the METS initiative has completed a draft schema for the encoding format and made it publicly available for review. The METS schema provides mechanisms for encoding descriptive, administrative, and structural metadata regarding objects within a digital library, and is expressed using the XML schema language of the World Wide Web Consortium. The METS schema tries to support the dual and sometimes competing requirements of ensuring interoperability and exchange of documents between different institutions while also allowing for significant flexibility in local practice with regards to descriptive and administrative metadata standards.

The organizational component of the METS initiative is also being pursued. The Network Development and MARC Standards Office of the Library of Congress has agreed to help maintain the standard and make it publicly available through their web site. Active development of the METS schema is currently being pursued by the Digital Library Federation; when the schema has been adequately reviewed by the membership of DLF, the Research Libraries Group will partner with the Library of Congress in maintaining the standard, with RLG taking on the role of work coordinator (continuing development of the schema and related technical work required to support METS' use).

Further information about METS may be obtained from the METS web site:
http://www.loc.gov/standards/mets/

The draft schema may be obtained for review at:
http://www.loc.gov/standards/mets/mets.xsd

Those interested in METS' origins may wish to exam the web site for the Making of America II project at:
http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/moa2/