

Changes to accessRights types definitions (CC-1185)

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An optional vocabulary for accessRights was introduced with RIF-CS v1.6.0 (December 2014). The vocabulary terms and definitions agreed to by the RIF-CS Advisory Board (RAB), were:

Open: refers to online data that may be electronically accessed free of charge with no restrictions imposed on the user.

Conditional: refers to online or offline data that may be accessed free of charge, providing certain conditions are met. For example, where:

- free registration is required to access data online;
 - data can only be accessed at its physical location;
 - formal permission to access the data must be granted.
- Details of the conditions may be provided as a free text value in accessRights.

Restricted: refers to online or offline data where access to the data is restricted. For example, where:

- access is only available to a particular group of users;
 - an embargo period applies;
 - a fee applies.
- Details of the restrictions may be provided as a free text value in accessRights.

Problem this suggestion addresses

Since the vocabulary terms and definitions were introduced, a number of providers have reported difficulty implementing these in practice. This was highlighted:

- with implementation of the “open” flag and search option in RDA with Release 15 (April 2014).
- As providers encoded data descriptions associated with Major Open Data Collection projects (June 2015).

Specific use cases identified include:

--where a cost recovery only fee applies
--where, by virtue of its size or type, data can only be accessed from a specific location.

One of the key issues raised is that the current definitions attempt to cover multiple aspects of “open data” in a single term and definition statement. Increasingly, it is being recognised that “open data” (or the openness of data) is characterised by a number of attributes. So, when attempting to implement the accessRights vocabulary terms, some providers expressed frustration at the lack of flexibility to accurately represent the “openness” of their data based on more than one attribute eg. accessibility and licence type. Given that the option to clearly encode licence information already exists using registryObject:collection:rights:type=licence it has been suggested that the definitions for accessRights types should be amended to more clearly describe the accessibility of data.

Identified by

ANDS staff

RIF-CS schema components affected

registryObject:collection:rights:type=accessRights

It should be noted that this proposal does not recommend changing the type terms – only their definitions. The proposed revised definitions are:

Open: Data is publicly accessible online.

Conditional: Data is publicly accessible subject to certain conditions. For example:

- a fee applies
- the data is only accessible at a specific physical location

Restricted: Data access is limited. For example:

- following an embargo period;
- to a particular group of users;

- where formal permission is granted.

We believe these revised definitions are aligned with agreed definitions of access for data.

Impact on content providers

The revised definitions are intended to provide greater clarity around the encoding and use of accessRights types. However, there are some implications for content providers who have used the existing definitions as the type displays in RDA and users may filter search results by accessRights type. We have determined that as of July 31:

- 8 providers have used accessRights:type="restricted". Of those 8 providers, 6 have fewer than 15 records with this encoding.
- 8 providers have used accessRights:type="conditional". Of those 8 providers, 5 have also used "restricted".
- 27 providers have used accessRights:type="open".

We expect no impact for those providers that have encoded records as "open".

However, the 11 providers that have records encoded as "restricted" or "conditional" may wish to review those records to determine if the type should be changed to align with the revised definitions. ANDS will work with those providers to minimise the effort associated with editing affected records.

Pros

The proposed change will enable providers to more accurately encode the open characteristics of collections described. It acknowledges that there is no single characteristic that defines open data. Additionally, it will enable changes to be implemented in the RDA interface to highlight characteristics of "openness". For example, access, licence and reuse information.

Cons

As mentioned above, some providers may wish to revisit those records encoded to current definitions. The accuracy of encoding will impact on RDA users who choose to filter search results by accessRights. A legacy could be some inconsistency of results. For example, existing records for data where an embargo period applies would display as "restricted". Based on the revised definitions, an embargo period would be defined as "conditional".

Technical options

- The vocabs.xml file will need to be amended to include the new definitions.
- The vocabularies.html will need to be regenerated to reflect the new definitions.
- The 'hover text' provided in RDA to support accessRights type will need to be updated.
- Changes will be required to the Content Providers Guide
 - <http://guides.andis.org.au/rda-cpg/rights>