



◆ **Good Reads**

Managing Scientific Metadata

- *Karen Baker, PAL LTER*

Matthew B Jones, Chad Berkley, Jivka Bojilova, and Mark Schildhauer, 2001.

Managing Scientific Metadata. IEEE Internet Computing Sep-Oct 2001.

(<http://computer.org/internet>)

This article provides both background into the use of metadata as a method to manage heterogeneous scientific data, summarizing original motivations, general approaches and community specifics. To cover such ground, the authors adopt an approach that may be regarded as a metaphor reflective of the cross-domain integrative strategies required for information management today. The metaphor, a conversation-within-a-conversation sidebar, highlights metadata standards, XML databases and interoperability issues. An LTER IM Metadata Workshop organized by P. McCarthy (CAP) and supported by the LTER Network Office provided a mechanism for LTER sites to focus on these issues and to consider site metadata transformation strategies compatible with interoperable formats, eg the Ecological Metadata Language. Given LTER Information Management discussions and metadata momentum, this paper provides insight into the broader context.

Is It Time to Bury the Ecosystem Concept?

- *Maria Vernet and Karen Baker, PAL LTER*

Robert O'Neill, Is it time to bury the ecosystem concept? Ecology 82(12), 2001 pp3275-3284

O'Neill reminds the reader that the ecosystem approach is a model we impose on nature and examines model assumptions including stability, fixed boundaries and homogeneity. Use of the ecosystem model over the past decades has revealed some aspects of natural systems are better explored through alternative methods. One focus is on the importance and impact of local stability and on the equally important concept of long-term sustainability. His framework provides the bigger context, beyond basin to global, so can address questions such as 'what is left in a location after ecosystem flight occurs'.

The statement "Homo sapiens is not an external disturbance, it is a keystone species within the system" suggests that with ecosystem defining characteristics like dispersal range (which in case of dogs and humans is global), we discover the disturbance/recovery of 'spaceship earth' is indeed in the hands of the species with a capacity for

a) information integration; b) organizational memory; c) humor; d) all of the above; e) none of the above.

The answer will be forthcoming.