



LSAL QuickTip: Using FRBR to Classify Digital Content

The **Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records** (FRBR) introduces a framework for classifying intellectual works, their formats and relationships with respect to physical libraries. Applied to the digital realm, FRBR could assist with issues involving versioning, ownership and attribution, and more.

Historical & Background Information

The **Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records** (FRBR) study was commissioned by the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA). It was published in 1998. Since FRBR (pronounced fur-bur) was created by the international library community, it focuses on classifying people, events, places and objects like books, movies, authors, presenters, periodicals, etc. FRBR, as published, does not appear to address today's rapidly changing, highly digital, collaborative content and work environments, but this document attempts to explain how the FRBR entity model might be applied to digital content.

FRBR Entities

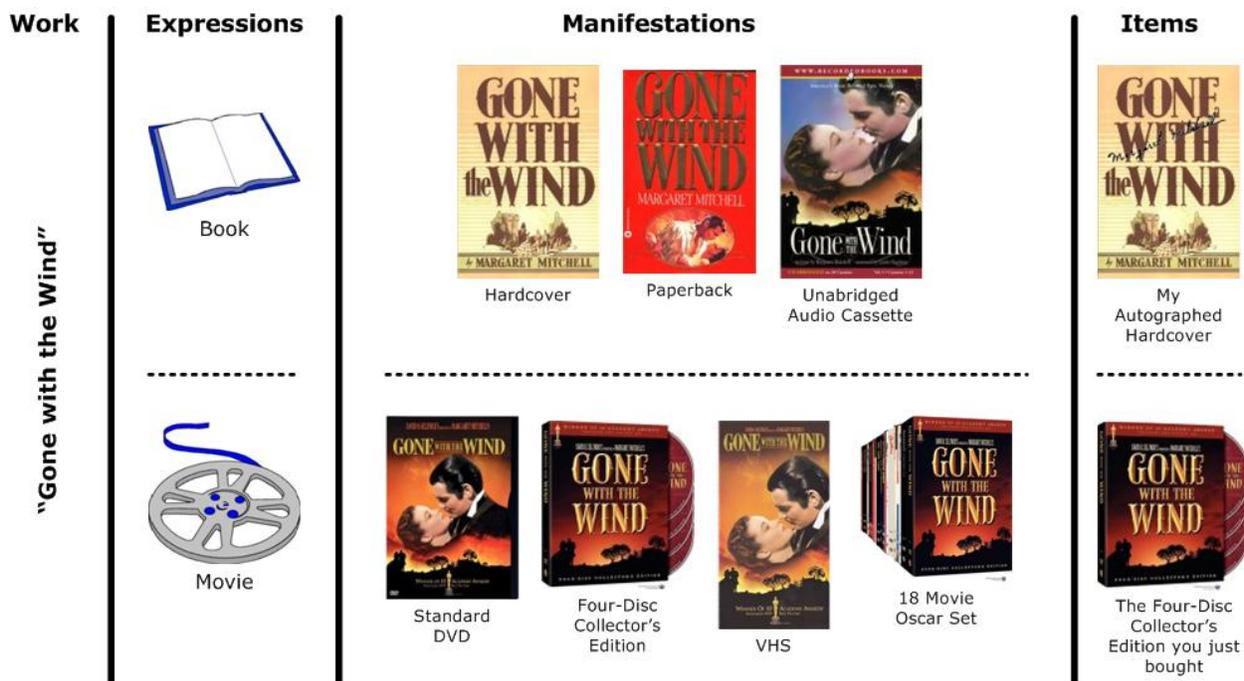
FRBR entities are the primary objects around which users would seek bibliographic data such as author, title, publication date, publisher, etc. The FRBR defined entity types are **Work**, **Expression**, **Manifestation**, and **Item**. You can remember these by using the mnemonic device WEMI.

The WEMI entities are used to classify information about things like books, music and audio recordings (sheet music, cassettes, compact discs, etc.), movies (VHS, DVD, etc.) and other objects you might find at a local library.

WEMI Entity	Official FRBR Definition
Work	A distinct intellectual or artistic creation
Expression	The intellectual or artistic realization of a work in the form of alpha-numeric, musical, or choreographic notation, sound, image, object, movement, etc., or any combination of such forms
Manifestation	The physical representation of an expression
Item	A single instance of a manifestation

Applying WEMI to Content

As an example, you stop by your friend's house and notice a DVD called *Gone with the Wind* on the coffee table. The copy lying on the table at your friend's house looks much like the copy you just ordered online. Every exact copy of this particular *Gone with the Wind* DVD (the Four-Disc Collector's Edition) could be examples of what FRBR calls **items**.



Items represent one **manifestation** (the Four-Disc Collector's Edition) of the movie **expression** known as *Gone with the Wind*. Other **manifestations** of the movie *Gone with the Wind* could include the VHS version, 18 Movie Oscar Set on DVD, the Limited Edition Collector's Set, etc.) The **expression** of *Gone with the Wind* as a movie is different from the **expression** of the novel *Gone with the Wind*, but both are based on a **work** created by author Margaret Mitchell. This is only one way of applying FRBR entities to *Gone with the Wind*.

Consider another example from *Gone with the Wind* where the movie *Gone with the Wind* is the **work**. The movie exists in many different formats (film, DVD, VHS, laser disc, etc.) each of which would be a distinct **expression** of the movie as a **work**. The DVD movie is sold in many **manifestations** (the Four-Disc Collector's Edition, the standard edition, as part of the 18 movie Best Picture Oscar Collection, etc.). The **item** you ordered is the Four-Disc Collectors Edition of *Gone with the Wind*.



These are two ways that the *Gone with the Wind* example could be applied using FRBR entities. There are countless other possibilities. The complete FRBR model supports additional relationships such as those between derivative works, works that exist as parts of collections or expressions that are translations of each other. This QuickTip does not address all aspects of FRBR.

Applying WEMI to Digital Content and Repositories

Using a system like FRBR to classify and organize content has many advantages. In the digital realm, applying WEMI entities to digital files and collections of files could help you search for, locate, select, and deliver the right content at the right time. Classifying and organizing your content effectively is essential when you assume that files will exist in a digital repository where multiple people from multiple entities in numerous locations may be seeking the same item.

The files you use every day are the items. Once a file is placed in a repository it will be classified as a manifestation because your item represents a single instance of that file in a given location.

If you apply FRBR to a piece of digital content, you could end up with something like this:

- **work:** *SCORM Best Practices Guide for Content Developers*
 - **expr.:** 1st Edition in English, dated February 28, 2003, Version 1.0
 - **man.:** Portable Document Format, 2.5MB
 - **item:** File at <http://www.lsal.cmu.edu/lsal/expertise/projects/developersguide/developersguide/guide-v1p0-20030228.pdf>
 - **item:** File on LSAL internal file server
 - **man.:** Microsoft Word Document, 19MB

- **item:** File on LSAL internal file server
- **expr.:** 1st Edition in Japanese dated February 28, 2003, Version 1.0
 - **man.:** Portable Document Format, 1.7MB
 - **item:** File at
<http://www.lsal.cmu.edu/lsal/expertise/projects/developersguide/developersguide/guide-v1p0-20030228-jp.pdf>
- **expr.:** 1st Edition in English dated April 5, 2004, Version 1.1
 - **man.:** Portable Document Format, 1.4MB
 - **item:** File at
<http://www.lsal.cmu.edu/lsal/expertise/projects/developersguide/developersguide/guide-v1p1-20050405.pdf>
 - **item:** File on LSAL internal file server

Example In Action

The FRBR model can be used in conjunction with the ADL Registry to ensure that you always get the latest version of your content. In today's ADL Registry, content is registered independent of any other content; if you update a course that you own, there is no process for users of older versions of your course to get the latest version. Each registered content is like an independent **manifestation**.

By applying FRBR to your content, you can relate each version of your content to a single **expression** or **work**. Then, instead of having users of your content look up a **manifestation** of your content, they can search for and get the **work** for your content; when they access your **work** by its identifier, they can get the latest version of your content.

References

Appropriate versions paper. <http://hdl.handle.net/2000.01/D6E3BF9462684182AC293D64D3DDE192>