Garbage In, Garbage Out - Making Metadata Portable

Terry Sinton*
Divestco Inc, Calgary, Alberta, Canada
terry.sinton@divestco.com

Abstract
Introduction
“What’s Next?” The climate of our industry is a bit like a game of musical chairs - when the music stops players have changed seats and someone has dropped out. Companies and assets are changing hands resulting in movement of data or more correctly metadata (which is information about data) from one database to another.

The future of databasing in our industry can be summed up in one word - Change. The only way to deal with change and survive is to embrace it.

It does not matter what kind of information a database contains, sometime during that data’s life cycle there will be a need to migrate it into another application. Sound data capture methodology can not only make your data portable but can actually increase asset value by making metadata readily available.

Data Capture Methodology
The challenge of moving metadata from one database to another is primarily caused by the methods we use to capture and record information. Issues to be addressed are:

- Determining metadata needs
- Formulas & Calculations
- Defining flat files
- Extraneous information
- Unique identifiers
- Connecting files
- Codes values
- Constrained fields
- Naming fields
- Reference lists
- Leading/trailing spaces
- Field mapping
- Multi-value fields
- Loading templates, data entry standards
- Delimiters
- Illegal characters
- Case & form
- Legacy/missing information
- Abbreviations

Conclusion
The purpose of this paper is to define issues effecting metadata portability and provide the information required to develop a data capture methodology that works.