

A Tale of a Cat and Two Mice

David McGoveran, © 1990

The question of whether to use an internal system catalog or an external data dictionary (repository) reminds me of a story.

Once upon a time there were two mice, one timid and one bold, who lived in a house with a big, aggressive cat. One day the timid mouse came running into the mouse hole, breathing hard, scare white as a lab mouse!

The bold mouse asked “What’s wrong?”

The timid mouse said “Whew! That was a close call! There’s a big piece of cheese out there on the floor, but the cat won’t let me get it!”

The bold mouse said “No problem! I’ll go get it. You wait here.”

And bold mouse charged out of the mouse hole before timid mouse could finish saying “Watch out for that cat!”

And sure enough, just as the bold mouse approached the cheese, the cat pounced on him.

Well, a few minutes later the bold mouse came running back in the mouse hole with the cheese.

“How did you do that?” asked the astonished timid mouse. “I saw the cat grab you!”

“Perspective” announced the bold mouse. “It’s all a matter of perspective!”

“What do mean?” asked the timid mouse.

“Well, when he grabbed me and started to shake me, I just bit into his nose so that the more he shook me, the more it hurt him. After a bit, he was so confused by the pain, he begged me to let him go!”