All knowledge contained in an information system must have been introduced into that system by some human agent, either directly or indirectly. Despite this fact, many, if not most, statements within such a system will lack specific attribution of authority. That being said, in the domain of cultural heritage, it is common practice that, for the processes of collection documentation and management, there are clearly and explicitly elaborated systems of responsibility outlining by whom and how knowledge can be added and or modified in the system. Ideally these systems are specified in institutional policy and protocol documents. Thus, it is reasonable to hold that all such statements that lack explicit authority attribution within the information system can, in fact, be read as the official view of the administrating institution of that system.

Such a position does not mean to imply that an information system represents at any particular moment a completed phase of knowledge that the institution promotes. Rather, it means to underline that, in a CH context, a managed set of data, at any state of elaboration, will in fact embody an adherence to some explicit code of standards which guarantees the validity of that data within the scope of said standards and all practical limitations. So long as the information is under active management it remains continuously open to revision and improvement as further research reveals further understanding surrounding the objects of concern.

A distinct exception to this rule is represented by information in the data set that carries with it an explicit statement of responsibility.

In CRM such statements of responsibility are expressed though knowledge creation events such as E13 Attribute Assignment and its relevant subclasses. Any information in a CRM model that is based on an explicit creation event for that piece of information, where the creator’s identity has been given, is attributed to the authority and assigned to the responsibility of the actor identified as causal in that event. For any information in the system connected to knowledge creation events that do not explicitly reference their creator, as well as any information not connected to creation events, the responsibility falls back to the institution responsible for the database/knowledge graph. That means that for information only expressed through shortcuts such as ‘P2 has type’, where no knowledge creation event has been explicitly specified, the originating creation event cannot be deduced and the responsibility for the information can never be any other body than the institution responsible for the whole information system.

In the case of an institution taking over stewardship of a database transferred into their custody, two relations of responsibility for the knowledge therein can be envisioned. If the institution accepts the dataset and undertakes to maintain and update it, then they take on responsibility for that information and become the default authority behind its statements as described above. If, on the other hand, the institution accepts the data set and stores it without change as a closed resource, then it can be considered that the default authority remains the original steward.