Cutting Through the Hype About Metadata

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November 18, 2005
Everything you need to know about metadata on one slide

- It’s more than cataloging
- It’s an essential part of any digital library project
- The planning is as important as the implementation
- Must choose the right tool for the job
- Always plan for interoperability
- There are lots of acronyms 😊
Well, not really…

- “Metadata” means many different things
- It involves applying traditional library principles to new environments
- These new environments are diverse
- Many of them have been developed for specific knowledge domains
- Metadata planning requires thinking abstractly
- There is always more to learn
Getting started with metadata

- Types of metadata
- Levels of control
- Methods of creating metadata
- A sample of other things to think about
- Some hot topics to watch
Some types of metadata

- Descriptive metadata
- Administrative metadata
  - Technical metadata
  - Preservation metadata
  - Rights metadata
- Structural metadata
How metadata is used
Levels of control

- Data structure standards, a.k.a “metadata schemas”
- Data content standards
- There are others as well
- Standards don’t always fall neatly into one category
When there’s no data content standard…
Creating metadata

- HTML <meta> tags
- Spreadsheets
- Databases
- XML
- Library catalogs
- Digital library content management systems
  - ContentDM
  - Greenstone
A sample of other things to think about

- XML technologies (XML, DTDs, XML Schema, XSLT, XPath, etc.)
- Unique identifiers
- Linking between records
- Writing procedures
- Mapping between metadata schemas, a.k.a “crosswalking”
- Metadata shareability
Some hot topics to watch

- MODS
- METS
- VRA Core/CCO
- OAI
- FRBR
- RDA
Metadata Object Description Schema (MODS)

- Bibliographic element set
- Developed and maintained by the Library of Congress
- Expressed in XML
- Heavily influenced by MARC, but tag names are words rather than numbers
- Not necessarily tied to AACR2
- Allows for specification of controlled vocabularies and encoding schemes used
Metadata Encoding and Transmission Standard (METS)

- “Wrapper” schema for descriptive, administrative, and structural metadata
- Descriptive and administrative metadata can be in any format
- Developed in the digital library community, maintained by the Library of Congress
- Expressed in XML
- Often used for “preservation packages”
VRA Core/Cataloging Cultural Objects (CCO)

- Initiatives of the Visual Resources Association
- Intended for the description for art & architecture
- VRA Core is a structure standard, CCO is a content standard
- Both currently in draft; VRA Core 4.0 and first version of CCO will be released early next year
- VRA Core takes some inspiration from Dublin Core
- VRA Core has separate records for Works and Images (and probably Collections in version 4)
- Together represent a major step forward for art image description
Open Archives Initiative (OAI)

- Protocol for metadata harvesting
- Began in the eprint community and expanded out
- “Data providers” expose metadata
- “Service providers” harvest metadata and pool it with metadata from other data providers
- Requires simple Dublin Core, but allows other supplementary formats
- Some OAI service providers
  - OAIster
  - Arc
  - UIUC Digital Gateway to Cultural Heritage Materials
  - OLAC
Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records (FRBR)

- 1998 report from IFLA
- Purpose: “to provide a clearly defined, structured framework for relating the data that are recorded in bibliographic records to the needs of the users of those records.”
- User tasks: find, identify, select, obtain
- Entity-relationship analysis employed
- 3 groups of entities defined (see handout)
- Ideas starting to be extended to authority records
Resource Description and Access (RDA)

- Name for the forthcoming revision of AACR
- Will incorporate FRBR principles and terminology
- Structure
  - Part I — Resource Description
  - Part II — Relationships
  - Part III — Access Point Control
- Development has been controversial
  - Changes too extreme for some
  - Changes not extreme enough for others
- Scheduled for publication in 2008
For more information

- Metadata librarians listserv: <http://metadatalibrarians.monarchos.com>
- Priscilla Caplan: Metadata Fundamentals for all Librarians, 2003
- These presentation slides and handouts: <http://www.dlib.indiana.edu/~jenlrile/presentations/iolug2005/>
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