

Topical Discussion Group 1: Choosing Electronic Resources: What Is a Valuable Web Resource?

Facilitator: Olivia Madison, Dean of Library Services, Iowa State University Library

Recorder: Martha Anderson, Library of Congress

Members: Karen Drabenstott, Bill Garrison, Michael Gorman, Tom Jacobson, Don Leslie, David Levy, Jennifer O'Connell, Jewel Player, Gary Price, Marc Sheaffer

The Assignment

The Topical Discussion Group (**TDG**) was asked to develop a prioritized list of four to six recommended selection criteria that academic, research, and national libraries could apply specifically in choosing worthwhile as well as so-called valuable Web resources for description. Such criteria would be a useful adjunct to local collection development policies, as well as a potential tool for collaborative collection activities among these libraries. They could also help strengthen the tie between catalogers, who do not traditionally select materials, and public services staff including recommending/selecting officers.

Recommendations

Olivia Madison presented the TDG's primary recommendation, which is directed to interests represented at the Conference as well as to other partners of the scholarly and information communities, e.g. the Association of Research Libraries and the American Library Association.

The recommendation is to:

- 1.1. *Create national/international database of standard records for Web resources.* Specific steps include:
 - 1.1.a. A working group (including libraries, archives, museums, etc.) to review and recommend criteria related to "Webness" that would be additional to traditional evaluation criteria.
 - 1.1.b. A plan for a national/international database of standard records.
 - 1.1.c. A computer-assisted mechanism, which would also include a human-labor component, for keeping the database up to date.

The TDG realized that it needed some definitions to help its discussions along, Ms. Madison said. Accordingly, the group identified the following *Categories of electronic resource*:

Print/electronic format traditionally "published;" includes government documents, e-books, e-journals (parallel to print as well as born digital)
Aggregated resources (e.g., Project Muse, Science Direct, etc.)
Archival/special collections materials

Note: For the most part, these resources would be evaluated with traditional collection development criteria. The following Internet-only resources are the most problematic in terms of identification and resources to provide access.

Web-only resources (created for the Internet with no corresponding print format):

- Reference tools
- Bibliographies
- Subject pages
- Course pages
- Data
- Personal pages
- Commercial/advertisement

TDG 1 finished its work at the Conference by identifying *selection criteria* for “valuable Web-only resources.” The group concluded that Web resources should be selected according to the same criteria that are universal for all formats and that certain criteria that are specific to Web resources should also be applied. The resulting selection criteria are:

Universal criteria for all formats (examples - others may be identified):

- Authorship
- Content
- Provenance
- Accuracy
- Relevance to institutional mission
- Subject

Criteria specific to Web resources (examples - others may be identified):

- Design
- Use
- Timeliness
- Permanence
- Quality of links to other sites
- Value-added utility beyond the print version
- Originating domain of the site
- Downloading capability
- Ready availability of needed add-on software for access
- Uniqueness
- “Reverse links,” i.e. quality and quantity of sites that link to the resource

The TDG also saw the importance of *preservation* as a selection criterion: the selecting institution should have a commitment to ensuring the long-term preservation of the resource chosen for cataloging.

Ms. Madison closed by stating that all types of libraries could use the selection criteria.

Post Conference Comments from Participants

None

12/29/00