

## **Topical Discussion Group 9: How Can Catalogers and Metadata Providers Ensure That Resource Descriptions Meet Reference Needs?**

**Facilitator:** Amy Tracy Wells, Digital Projects Coordinator, Michigan State University Libraries

**Recorder:** Eugene Kinnaly, Library of Congress

**Members:** Marcia Bates, Thomas Downing, Charles Fenly, Kathi Gruber, Gillian Harrison, Carolyn Larson, Karen Smith-Yoshimura

### **The Assignment**

The Topical Discussion Group (**TDG**) was asked to identify four to six descriptive needs for catalogers and metadata providers to use in creating resource descriptions that would help meet the reference needs identified in the survey described by Carolyn Larson and Linda Arret in their Conference paper, "Descriptive Resource Needs from the Reference Perspective." Key issues covered by the survey included: optimum "levels" of library and metadata descriptions; descriptive elements felt to be essential in the cataloging record; additional descriptive elements felt to facilitate content retrieval; and problems that might be addressed through improved interaction between metadata and present-day technologies, including the incorporation of such traditional concepts as authority files and thesauri.

### **Recommendations**

Amy Tracy Wells, in her report to the Conference plenary session, commented that the members of the TDG were quite diverse in their experience and responsibilities, and as a result, their recommendations were suited to a wide range of information consumers, including reference librarians and end users of information. Further that they had confined their focus to electronic resources and functional needs given the task scope and time constraints. Lastly, that they recognized that customization is based on local needs.

- 9.1. The TDG recommended, first and foremost, that the Library of Congress sponsor an ongoing series of open forum on reference service in conjunction with each American Library Association Annual Conference. This series would continue the very fruitful LC Institute on Reference Service in a Digital Age held in 1998. The TDG urged LC to plan a reference forum for ALA Annual Conference in San Francisco in 2001, to include catalogers, reference librarians, vendors, systems people, publishers, and administrators.
- 9.2. The TDG further recommended that catalogers and metadata providers *develop partnerships and alliances with respect to these five functional areas:*
  - 9.2a. Additional subject and other access mechanisms (e.g., front-end user thesaurus)
  - 9.2b. Granularity of access and display (e.g., progression through hierarchy, through versions, through additional description information including summaries)
  - 9.2c. Authenticity (e.g., security)
  - 9.2d. Permanency (e.g., archiving)

- 9.2e. Links (e.g., more catalog information about hyperlinks, more feature like hyperlinks, and information pertaining to rights management)

Marcia Bates, a member of the TDG, said that the discussion group urged that the partnerships in each area emphasize steps that were specific to reference needs with respect to electronic resources.

## **Post Conference Comments from Participants**

### **Additional Notes from TDG 9 meetings (prepared by Amy Tracy Wells, Facilitator)**

During the process of brainstorming, the Group identified many metadata elements including:

Authenticity

Granularity

Permanence

Links:

Version

More like

To object

To surrogate

Terms of use

Navigation

Title

Primary Author

Summary

Source e.g. publisher

Terms of Use

Collection level information

Original scripts

Scope in context

Display considerations

Personal names

Single record vs. multiple records

Subject Headings

Keywords

All personal authors

Alternate title

User thesaurus

Geographical areas

Names e.g. Union List of Artists Names

Dates/Period/Style

Title level access vs. Article level access

Dates of coverage  
Date published  
Format (MIME types)  
Size of object  
Secondary enhancers e.g. performers, musicians, actors, illustrators, etc.  
Sub-documents e.g. titles on CD, Chapter 2, illustrations, etc.  
Affiliation of creator and contributor  
Agency affiliation  
Unique identifying nos. e.g. ISSN, SIC, etc.  
Holdings  
Resource Type  
Language  
Version

Our recommendations explicitly acknowledge that:

We were discussing electronic objects.

Our discussion needed to be concerned with overall functional needs rather than specific elements.

Our recommendations derived from a nine-member group with very different responsibilities and experiences.

One size does not fit all -- customization is based on local need.

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