
On the first page Managing metadata in web-scale discovery systems poses a clear and important question: to what extent are current metadata standards and practices fit ‘to manage the growing assortment of library materials available’? Over the subsequent chapters, the authors explore this larger question by examining the role of metadata in web-scale discovery systems. This provides a useful introduction to the complexities of search and discovery for today’s libraries.

Louise F. Spiteri’s opening chapter articulates an example university library scenario, which will be familiar, especially to academic librarians aiming to create a successful searching environment for increasingly diverse collections with various schemas. It effectively describes the impacts of internal library processes and systems on the user’s experience. This focus on the user’s perspective of discovery is an engaging feature throughout the text.

Chapter 2 examines sharing metadata for successful discovery. This chapter benefits from very explicit and precise definitions, especially when describing mapping metadata. Similarly, its breakdown of search and retrieval technologies (such as library catalogues, federated searches, and discovery interfaces) ensures the content is accessible for students. The examination of metadata for discovery is very thorough, introducing key concepts that underpin the text and providing a comprehensive discussion of issues.

Linked open data is the focus of chapter 3. Each related topic is discussed analytically (big data, research data, linked data, and web of data), providing the reader with clear definitions of emerging trends. The library specific examples and techniques are very useful in contextualizing the concepts and highlighting relevance to discovery. Ali Shiri and Danoosh Davoodi present a strong case for libraries to engage with these emerging data movements.

In chapter 4, Christine DeZelar-Tiedman provides an historical overview from card catalogues to web-scale discovery systems, describing the influence of the web, electronic journals and packages, Web 2.0, institutional repositories, and metasearch on discovery. This is a useful introduction that also explains the context from which web-scale discovery systems have evolved. The discussion of library resources is well researched and current, particularly in reflecting trends relating to digitising special collections and research data.

Aaron Tay’s chapter is a thoughtful consideration of volume versus quality of results in web-scale discovery systems. It raises core issues for libraries, including a concise and well-researched examination of the difficulty of effective relevance ranking and the high failure rates of known item searches, which results from combining collections with different standards of metadata (catalogue, institutional repositories, and a central index) in a single discovery layer.

Chapter 6, like chapter 5, is practical and informative in its approach, highlighting key issues for librarians when working with vendors and key developments towards standardization. This chapter also has a strong focus on defining the needs of library users in negotiating with providers.

Chapter 7 discusses user generated metadata, synthesizing several studies comparing authority headings to folksonomies. It also identifies a key gap in the research on personal information spaces in
library systems, despite the success of personalization for commercial websites. It also raises the crucial question of motivation for library users to contribute user generated data.

Each chapter stands independently and contains extensive references for further reading. Like other Facet titles, the detailed index and use of headings and subheadings make it an accessible text. Although the introduction advises of some repetition, in most cases this reinforces key issues. It discusses critically a comprehensive range of standards and schemas, from traditional cataloguing to linked open data. This text provides a good, user-focused, introduction to web-scale discovery, not only for students, but also to practitioners aiming to understand metadata which underpins – and supports – effective discovery.

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