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Book Review

Metadata and Its Impact on Libraries. Sheila S. Intner, Susan I. Lazinger & Jean Weihs. Westport, Connecticut: [Libraries Unlimited](#), 2006, V, 262 p., 88 Post Road West, Westport CT 06881, USA. 2006, Hardcover, ISBN 1-29158-145-1, \$ 45.00

Metadata is a subject that has attracted a lot of interest from many and diverse scientific communities over the years. Numerous papers and international conferences reflect the contributions and the variations in the views and applications of metadata in each scientific community. This book, written by three distinguished cataloguers, reflects the perspective of the library and information science world.

The lack of an extended table of contents and the choice of unclear levels of headings in each chapter do not help the reader to grasp both the coverage and the usefulness of the book. Once you get past this first impression, it is clear that this is a useful book for both students, particularly for teaching undergraduate students in the field of library and information science and for early stage researchers in the area of metadata. The authors attempt to cover a breadth of issues that surround metadata research and many chapters could have been expanded with comparative information from other scientific communities to form individual books in their own rights.

The book is divided into two parts. The first part gives a brief introduction to metadata and attempts to address their relations to particular communities. It describes applications of metadata in the library and information science context and their use in the description of monographic and continuing resources and their use in library catalogues and databases. The second part describes the impact of metadata on current and future collections and services.

In Chapter 1, the authors define the context in which metadata is discussed in this book. They provide several definitions about metadata that can be found in the literature ([Caplan](#), 2003; [Greenberg](#), 2002; [Hudgings, Agnew & Brown](#), 1999; [Dempsey](#), 1998; [Taylor](#), 2004). They define metadata as "*structured information used to find, access, use and manage information resources primarily in a digital environment*" ([International Encyclopedia of Information and Library Science](#), 2003) and the aim of the book is to explore the influence of metadata on libraries and the understanding of library and information science professions of it. They present the metadata principles; they discuss metadata misconceptions, list types of metadata and metadata association models and conclude by summarising metadata characteristics.

Chapter 2 attempts to define the metadata landscape addressing the issues around syntactic, semantic and structural interoperability. They provide an introduction to meta-languages and metadata element sets and conclude by discussing issues around the *Open Access Initiative* and interoperable metadata formats.

Chapter 3 presents metadata schemas related to the library and information science profession. It is concerned with the so called "content standards" which the authors define as "*the kind of information recorded in the description of an information object, printed or digital*". The chapter is divided into three sections dealing with the traditional descriptive cataloguing standards and the controlled vocabularies and the classifications systems in existence dealing with the subject content in the first section. The second section lists the encoding schemes used for the transmission of the information pertained in the aforementioned schemes and last the efforts for establishing harmonisation across different metadata standards.

Chapters 4 & 5 have a similar structure. They describe respectively the metadata that is used for the description of monographic and periodical material. They both address issues around the subject analysis, bibliographic description, descriptive access points and control data. The authors present several examples from print and digital resources both in the web version (html form) and ISBD/MARC representations and also list a few exercises for the readers at the end of each chapter. Chapter 6 discusses the problems experienced in the process of integrating data and metadata in library catalogues/systems and recommendations for addressing them.

The second part of the book comprises of four chapters, chapters 7-10. The first chapter of the second part, Chapter 7, provides an overview of current digital library projects, issues and problems encountered in digital projects, the successes and failures of metadata in practice and a suggested model for successful digital library projects that list ten characteristics, among them and relevant to the content of the book, adoption of standards and knowledgeable staff.

Chapter 8 provides an introduction to the wide area of archiving and preservation of digital materials. The authors attempt to list issues associated with what material should be digitised, who bears the responsibility for such tasks, how technology and its obsolescence has an impact on the archiving and preservation of material and finally the costs associated with such tasks. The authors also provide a brief overview of archiving and preservation projects in the USA, UK, and rest of Europe and Global initiatives.

Chapters 9 and 10 are rather short but are probably the chapters that reflect mostly the book's title. They present the impact of digital resources the services that libraries provide to their users such as online reserves, online reference services, online user instruction and services to off-site users and also the impact on the education and training that the library schools provide. The last chapter of the book lists what has been reported in the literature as future trends in the area of metadata research.

In general, this book is easy to read and follow throughout. Among some of its useful features are the appendices in chapter 2 that list elements from various metadata element sets such as Dublin Core, GILS, Ariadne and also categories for the description of works of Art. Furthermore, the examples provided in chapters 4 and 5 about the use of metadata for the description of monographic and periodical material and their provided solutions make it interesting for undergraduate students and early stage researchers in the area of metadata research to follow.

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