LET FACEBOOK BE YOUR GUIDE TO THE NEW CATALOGUING STANDARD

When people hear the word 'cataloguing' they either switch off or get very excited. Renate Beilharz gets excited because, as she says, quality cataloguing and metadata are essential for effective discovery in a digital future.

All library staff, whether passionate about cataloguing or not, should have an understanding of cataloguing and the metadata that drives the search engines, including Online Public Access Catalogues (OPACs), used by library patrons. According to the International Principles of Cataloguing 2009, cataloguing standards exist to assist users to find, identify, select and obtain information and resources to meet their needs, supporting the purpose of libraries and the role of library staff by connecting people and information. It is through effective discovery systems that relevant and accurate information and resources are accessed.

It is incumbent upon librarians to encourage library systems vendors to continually improve their systems and embrace latest developments in information discovery. Librarians can only do this if they have some understanding of the concepts and the benefits.

Many university libraries have a discovery layer which will search the library's physical and digital collections with a single request. It is accurate metadata – cataloguing - that enables federated searching of multiple databases and collections.

Despite the constant improvements in library search portals, world wide web search engines such as Google are still the first port of call for most people looking for information. So, on the one hand we have library discovery systems and on the other side the world wide web. Latest developments in information discovery will enable greater integration between these discovery tools. These developments include Functional Requirement for Bibliographic Records (FRBR) and the semantic web.

FBBR is a model for organising bibliographic and authority information based on the needs of the data's user. It underpins the RDA cataloguing standards. The 'semantic web' enables computers to 'understand' the meaning behind the information being shared, to disambiguate searches and provide accurate relevant search results. Both FRBR and semantic web use 'entity-relationship modelling' and 'linked data'; this is the all important connection between library catalogues and the world wide web that will allow for ever greater integration of the search portals.

FRBR, like the semantic web and linked data, is based on linked data triples, that is, entities (things) and relationships. Entities in FRBR, and therefore in RDA, are clearly defined. They include works, editions of works, people, places, concepts and so on, with 11 defined entities. These entities have defined relationships with other entities and each entity has its own identifying attributes.

Facebook makes a great example of how this works. I am an entity in Facebook. I have attributes: my name is Renate, am female and I am 160 cm tall. I have relationships with other entities in Facebook: 'friend of', 'mother of'.

Another great and perhaps slightly more traditional example is a book. Let's take the great children's favourite, Possum Magic by Mem Fox. This library example illustrates the FRBR entities, relationships and attributes that already exist in library catalogues, along with linked data triples.

It works like this: Possum Magic is a work entity. It has a 'written by' relationship with Mem Fox (person entity). It has a 'illustrated by' relationship with Julie Vivas (person entity). Possum Magic has attributes, including being first published 1983 and its picture book format. Mem Fox has an attribute too - her year of birth.

In the diagram you can see the linked data triples for this book: Possum Magic (subject) is written by (relationship) Mem Fox (object). Possum Magic (subject) is illustrated by (relationship) Julie Vivas (object).

FRBR and RDA have positioned library cataloguing data firmly in the world of the semantic web, with its focus on entities and relationships. Only by embracing RDA, FRBR and linked data models will library catalogue systems continue to be an integral part of commonly used discovery systems, and will provide users with accurate, relevant and focussed search mechanisms. It is up to library and information professionals to talk to library system developers and vendors and encourage them to embrace FRBR and linked data models in their development plans for their systems.

Library staff should continue developing their knowledge of cataloguing, metadata and resource discovery systems and so ensure that libraries play an active role in the digital future of effective resource discovery in the

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