

Chapter 110

Metadata in Serbia: Describing Library Collections, Towards a More Semantic Web

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ABSTRACT

This chapter discusses the usage of metadata in libraries in Serbia. So far metadata have been used for describing printed documents available for patrons in library holdings and for describing digital documents available in online repositories. Paper presents some specific aspects of metadata usage primarily in regards to automation of digital data delivery for patrons. The advent of information technologies provides librarians in Serbia, as well as their colleagues in other countries, with powerful tools to describe digital objects and interconnect them making those related digital objects effectively available for users via an emergent, more semantic web.

INTRODUCTION

Metadata is structured information that describes, explains, locates, or otherwise makes it easier to retrieve, use, or manage an information resource (National Information Standards Organization, 2004). Metadata or data about data are as old as librarianship and are being considered and are still considered to be a prime product of librarianship practice (Coyle, 2005). In order to keep, preserve

and organize data librarians need to describe them. Therefore when we talk about metadata we often talk about librarianship (Good, 2002; JISC Digital Media, 2010). Usually metadata are employed through one of the metadata schemas and the knowledge of these is considered to be one of the more important items in a librarian education (Greenberg, 2005). Recently, overwhelming progress of the digital have made metadata essential for anyone dealing with vast number of

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digital objects and therefore many experts with different and complementary skills are involved with metadata, even in the framework of a single project, making the issue of metadata a complex and even the social one (Hall & Khoo, 2013). Metadata are often perceived as a tool for making digital objects more visible and accessible and the Web more efficient (Shukair et al., 2013). In such a complex world metadata usage in libraries is dynamically changing especially in regards to Open Access initiatives, options for free availability of catalogue records and relations with commercial publishers (Flynn, 2013).

Metadata usage in libraries in Serbia so far was mostly related to the general librarianship practice. In the past metadata was mostly considered a tool for achieving the means of describing printed collections. The fine art of classification was considered the core of librarianship business and the most respected job in a Serbian library. The advent of Internet and prevailing importance of electronic resources is creating changes that are ongoing. Following these changes and being on top of them is now considered to be the core and the fine art of librarianship. New technologies provide tools for metadata usage that has not been possible in the previous periods especially in the field of automation of digital data delivery. Metadata describing relations between digital objects are considered to be an important issue and preparations are in full blown phase to incorporate this additional aspect of metadata usage in Serbian libraries.

Overall situation in regards to metadata usage in Serbia today can be described as sketchy with different types of metadata used and a range of various purposes and ideas for metadata usage and even more ideas and initiatives for planning of future use of metadata. Presentation of this variety may be useful for anyone studying metadata since a range of historical usage can be juxtaposed by library types and content types leading to some interesting conclusions about general trends of librarianship practice development in Serbia and

explanations on how metadata are being indicative or driving these trends. Also the idea of user orientation has been driven by contemplation of metadata usage in Serbian libraries. If one is creating metadata his or hers job is directly in relation to usage of the materials described by this metadata. Hence sooner or later the purpose and nature of metadata is brought into the focus of attention and soon user needs and expectations are more in the focus of librarians than they have been before. Lively discussions are often heard at librarianship conferences and meetings in Serbia on metadata usage and purpose of their creation sparking the dialogue on essence of librarianship industry and always bringing back the focus on users. This is perhaps the most important trend when one describes metadata usage in Serbia. Questions arising from discussing choices of metadata model, usage and production are important drivers for librarianship in Serbia and therefore need to be addressed frequently.

METADATA DESCRIBING PRINTED HOLDINGS OF SERBIAN LIBRARIES

Creation of electronic records for the printed items in Serbian libraries is affected by dual impact of historical and financial issues. Numerous editions printed before 1980 are still not described by electronic records, because to create those records scares work hours need to be devoted. Therefore most libraries in Serbia with large printed holdings have decided not to create electronic records for certain items until they are borrowed for the first time. Often large parts of the holdings are not used at all and this makes creation of electronic records not a high priority. In order to identify those items that are really used and therefore needs to be visible through OPAC this method was chosen by many libraries in Serbia (Popović-Bošković & Filipi-Matutinović, 2001). Some libraries in Serbia still do use card catalogues to describe their printed holdings. Some smaller libraries

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