

Summary of the Hot Topics: Metadata Forum (TCDL 2010):

Hot Topic 1: What are considered core metadata fields and where can this information be found?

Discussion:

- Various elements were mentioned as core descriptive elements, including author, title, identifier, content type, date, etc.
- Simple Dublin Core was mentioned as a starting point to define a core descriptive element set since it is a descriptive metadata standard that already exist and is in use by many institutions.
- The topic expanded to the use of controlled vocabularies in non-MARC metadata. For example, should we have controlled vocabularies for certain elements such as type, subject, author, contributor, etc.?
- Use of various content standards, such as AACR2, RDA, and CCO, would be useful to enforce consistency in metadata records.
- Issues with authority control in institutional repositories were mentioned as an ongoing challenge.

Hot Topic 2: “We don’t need complex metadata. Full text is good enough; just look at Google!” Do you agree or disagree? How do you back up your belief? What do you think that means for libraries?

Discussion:

- Attendees discussed Google as a competitor, partner, or a resource of libraries.
- Unreliable information is often retrieved due to poor metadata.
- User tags as an input metadata option to keep up with the ever increasing amount of web resources that are created on a daily basis.
- Do library metadata offer more authoritative metadata information than Google? Yes, because library metadata is focusing on a particular audience which is looking for informative, scholarly, and legitimate information they can use in their publications, etc.

Hot Topic 3: The “metadata bottleneck”: is it a real problem? How do you balance metadata-creation efficiency with metadata quality?

Discussion:

- Minimal descriptive metadata approach: Under the current economic condition, it may need to be considered to provide minimal metadata for digital objects at the beginning. Archivists have been practicing minimal description based on cost-effective analysis. The issue involved with this approach is how often institutions go back to update such minimal metadata.
- Providing metadata best practices to TDL community will be useful for the TDL member institution in terms of efficiency and consistency.
- Texas Tech has developed an automatic process for creating metadata records for their ETDs.
- Unfortunately, there is still no independent software/system that has been created to check for quality assurance. Some institutions have created these types of tools in-house, but none have been willing to share that code or the tool is so integrated into the overall system that it is not feasible to extract it as an independent tool. This is an ongoing issue and until resolved will create bottlenecks in the workflow when checking quality assurance of metadata.