

Running Head: COMPARING METADATA

Comparing Metadata from Three Digital Collections

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Recently viewing three websites metadata, numerous differences became apparent. The three were The ALSOS Digital Library for Nuclear Issues, Oviatt Library Digital Collections and eBird. ALSOS contains information about nuclear power, atom bomb, medical effects of radiation, nuclear weapons programs from various countries, and experts in the field. The collection includes links to websites, articles, books, videos, audio files. ALSOS doesn't seem to host anything on their server, and many of the records contain links to other databases and websites that host this information. Other records from ALSOS simply seem to be a record for a physical item not housed in any particular library, but contains a link to Worldcat so the user can find a copy from a local library himself. To access many of the articles linked, one must pay for the article or find it through the databases through his own library.

The Digital Collection at Oviatt Library serves the California State University at Northridge contains photos, articles from local newspapers, music scores, old photos, artifacts and documents, (Oviatt also appears to have guitar scores, but it appears that they cannot be viewed, just the metadata.) It appears that the main purpose of this digital library is to make rare, fragile, and historic documents readily available to those who would otherwise not have access to them.

The third website viewed was eBird. This one differed in that it actually wanted user input. The data was collected by users then eBird employees review the data before it is finalized. eBird contains maps, charts and graphs of bird locations and occurrences. There is a very nice list of guidelines for users to follow in order to collect the right types and amounts of data about their bird watching. Along with the maps, there were also photos and taxonomies for bird species. For a bird watcher, this digital library could be very useful. There is information from all over the world that dates back from 1900. On one map view, it gives the dates and times of the bird sightings, as well as the observer's name, and species names. Since eBird depends highly on user input, it's hard to tell how accurate the data is.

Taking a closer look at records from from ALSOS and from Oviatt, more differences showed themselves. The record from ALSOS that chosen was for a book located at this URL: <http://alsos.wlu.edu/information.aspx?id=2351&search=Weldon+Springs,+Missouri> The properties

listed are Author, Title, Publisher, City, Date Published and ISBN. There is also a brief description about the book, which is not labeled, but could be labeled as "description." This is all descriptive metadata, or metadata used to describe and catalog the item (Miller, 2011). No incidence of administrative, or structural metadata for this entry was located. The chosen record from Oviatt that was for a Bronze tiger statue located here: <http://digital-library.csun.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/Tseng/id/3>. Properties for this metadata included descriptive metadata such as Title, Creation date, material; administrative metadata such as date digitized, and identifier number, and rights.

Comparing these two digital collections in terms of usability, the Oviatt collection is much more easy to navigate, however, the search box doesn't seem to work. Every search yields no results. ALSOS's search does work, though the metadata doesn't include keywords. There was much more granularity within Oviatt's digital collection. This is especially apparent in the Daily Sundial collection, where each page of the Campus newspaper appears to have its own set of metadata and can be viewed separately from others. ALSOS only contained metadata about entire books or videos, never about sections of books or videos. It was a bit easier to browse.

The author enjoyed Oviatt's digital collection more than the other two. It may be because along with the metadata, it also contained the data. ALSOS only contained data about the information, for example, it only contained the descriptive metadata for a book and not the actual content of the book. eBird contained so much specific data and different types of data that it was hard to navigate. Oviatt, however, had metadata, as well as the data it described. It had an article from the newspaper, along with descriptive and administrative metadata about said article. It was more useful to the end user that just the metadata from ALSOS was.

References

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