

# UNDERSTANDING USERS' NEEDS: HOW CAN WE KNOW WHAT THEY WANT?

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## **CURRENT NEED FOR METADATA ASSESSMENT**

- **Changing nature of collections**
- **Development of new technologies and standards**
- **Ability demonstrate value in metadata work**

# USABILITY STUDIES AND ASSESSMENT

- **Think-aloud studies**
- **Search logs**
- **Website analytics**
- **Surveys**

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- Think-aloud studies
- Search logs
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- Users' behaviors and expectations are not separated from the system
- Metadata is not separated from the system

## THREE METADATA-FOCUSED STUDIES

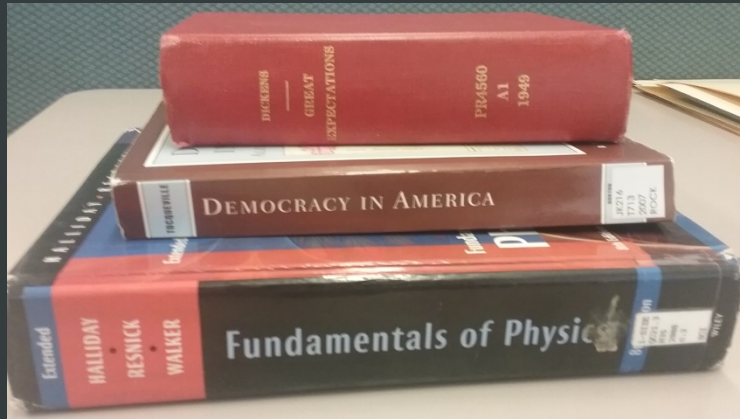
Type of material	Population	Topic
Music resources (scores, sound recordings, etc.)	Music students at liberal arts colleges	Bibliographic description of music resources
Visual art	Undergraduates at Cornell University in an Art History class	Subject analysis in Art
Text monographs	Graduate students at Brown University in any discipline	Bibliographic description of monographs multi-discipline

## COMMONALITIES OF THE STUDIES

- Participants asked to describe items in a collection
- Information gathered from participants were compared against current standards or practices
- Users were not asked to interact with a search interface

# SPECIFICS OF BROWN'S STUDY

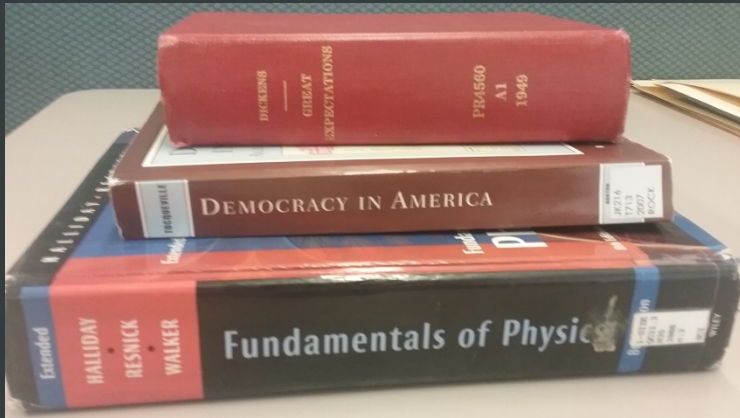
Describe:





# SPECIFICS OF BROWN'S STUDY

## Describe:



## Form:

### Book 1

*Please describe this book so that it can be found, identified, and a person could decide whether to read it.*

*What words would you use to search for this book in the library's search box?*

Brown University Library study

# PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

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# DIFFERENCES BETWEEN PARTICIPANTS

Example from descriptions of *Great Expectations*:

- Students in the sciences focused on the subject of *Great Expectations*
  - Students in the humanities and social sciences focused on information about the specific edition of *Great Expectations*
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## **STATUS** (E.G. CLASSIC, FREQUENTLY CITED, ETC.)

- 4 of the 6 participants recorded it for at least 1 book
  - 1 participant recorded it for all 3 books
  - *Great Expectations* had status noted for by each of the 4 that recorded it.
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## RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER WORKS

- 5 of the 6 participants recorded relationship information
- 1 participant recorded it for all 3 books
- Recorded most often for *Democracy in America* and *Fundamentals of Physics*
- Recorded in our catalog records for *Democracy in America* and *Fundamentals of Physics*
- Recorded by 2 participants for *Great Expectations*

## GENRE

- Recorded by all 6 participants for at least 1 book
  - 2 participants recorded it for all 3 books
  - All participants recorded the genre for *Fundamentals of Physics*.
  - Genre was recorded in the *Fundamentals of Physics* and *Great Expectations* catalog records
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## PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

- Recorded by 5 of 6 participants for at least 1 book
  - 4 participants recorded it for all 3 books
  - Each of the 5 included physical description for *Great Expectations* and *Democracy in America*
  - Included in each of the 3 catalog records
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# DIFFERENCES BETWEEN PARTICIPANTS AND CATALOGS

- Frequently participants used fewer types of information to describe an item than catalog records
  - Participants were more likely to include information about the status of a book, or the context in which it is used
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# THOUGHTS ON METHODOLOGY

- Participant's role as a cataloger
  - Contextual information
  - Knowledge of how information is used
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# OPPORTUNITIES FOR FUTURE WORK

- Studies targeted at testing specific themes
  - More in-depth analysis of subject-specific needs
  - Test for specific user tasks
  - Analyze existing sources of data for resource description
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# WHY?

- Reframe conversations with administrators about the value of metadata work
  - Have concrete evidence for decisions we make and directions to develop
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IF YOU'RE INTERESTED IN TALKING MORE...

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## **SPECIAL THANKS TO:**

- **Institute for Research Design in Librarianship**
  - **Brown University colleagues and students**
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## SELECT REFERENCES:

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