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
## Usability Studies and Assessment

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<tr>
<th>Think-aloud studies</th>
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### THREE METADATA-FOCUSED STUDIES

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Type of material</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Music resources</td>
<td>Music students at liberal arts colleges</td>
<td>Bibliographic description of music resources</td>
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<tr>
<td>(scores, sound recordings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>etc.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Visual art</td>
<td>Undergraduates at Cornell University in an Art</td>
<td>Subject analysis in Art</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>History class</td>
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<tr>
<td>Text monographs</td>
<td>Graduate students at Brown University in any</td>
<td>Bibliographic description of monographs multi-discipline</td>
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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?
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*
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.
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.
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
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.
THOUGHTS ON METHODOLOGY

- Participant’s role as a cataloger
- Contextual information
- Knowledge of how information is used
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
WHY?

- Reframe conversations with administrators about the value of metadata work
- Have concrete evidence for decisions we make and directions to develop
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
SELECT REFERENCES:


