Topical Discussion Group 6: What Automated Tools Could Assist Libraries to Meet the Information Needs of Their Users?

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Recorder: Victoria Behrens, Library of Congress
Members: Karim Boughida, Jeffrey Heynen, Jane Mandelbaum, Edward O'Neill, Fred Rodgers, Gary Strawn, Mark Wilson, Peter Young

The Assignment

Starting from the premise that it is incumbent upon libraries to explore further the development and application of automated tools in the areas of selection, cataloging, and reference service, the Topical Discussion Group (**TDG**) was asked to develop a list of recommended tools for further automating resource organization and discovery on the Web.

Recommendations and Report

Robert Wolven reported that the TDG had considered "short-term" recommendations for tools that would use existing systems and standards for relatively narrow ends, but had focused in the end on more broadly based tools that would help create and foster new models of resource organization and discovery. The Group's first and strongest recommendation was for creating and ensuring the ready availability of a metadata authoring tool for use by "naive users" such as the authors of documents and publishing agents.

6.1. (*Priority 1*). Metadata authoring tool for naive users; the tool would have the following desired features:
6.1a. Uses document content to extract metadata
6.1b. Can accommodate any common metadata standard (with special mention of ONIX)
6.1c. Open-source stand-alone
Goal of embedding in document-creation software and other programs in future
6.1d. Moderated by LC's Network Development and MARC Standards Office
NDMSO is seen as honest broker
6.1e. Interacts with online authority schemes (names, subject thesaurus, classification)
Software agent enforces schemes

Wolven described other TDG recommendations, as follows:

6.2. (*Priority 2*). Maintenance tool
6.2a. Designed to detect changes in resource content that affect metadata
6.2b. Reapplies programs for automatic metadata extraction and compares results to last use
6.2c. Includes flexible options for reporting and ranking detected changes in resource

6.3. *(Priority 2*). Resource categorization tool

6.3a. Provides improved categorization and sorting of search results by, e.g.
- Internet domain (.edu, .gov)
- Classification
- Resource type, format, or genre

6.3b. Provides post-search user selected options (rather than search limits)

6.3c. May be created for any of several environments (web search engines, OPAC, etc.)

6.4. (*Priority 2*). Resource selection and evaluation tool

6.4a. Examines:
- Innate characteristics of resource
- Extent and nature of external linkages
- Use patterns

6.4b. Reports results according to user-specified criteria

6.5. *(Priority 2*). User feedback tool
- Includes standard template

Discussion

During the audience comment period, Brian Schottlaender observed that a number of similar tools already exist and asked how the TDG proposed that those tools be leveraged. Dan Chudnov responded from the audience, "If it's a good, open-source tool, the community will be there for you." Wolven noted the need for standards and the recognition that developing such automated tools must be an iterative process: incorporating metadata standards within the tools will encourage their use; wider use will encourage their development to include additional features and standards.

Post Conference Comments from Participants

None

12/29/00