Library APIs and Book Discovery in new Library Services

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Libraries need to innovate the presentation of the content on which they still are experts: meta-data. The Oslo Public Library is currently developing the open source toolkit MARC2RDF for producing RDF representations of library catalogues and their authority files. In addition to plain conversion of MARC bibliographic data into RDF, the toolkit includes SPARQL methods for clustering of the library collection, rules and metadata inferencing, as well as enriching catalogue data with external content, such as cover images and book reviews, from various APIs and Linked Open Data sources. Further development of the toolkit intends to produce a web application to register, import and convert libraries, synchronize meta-data between libraries, and expose content through customized APIs.

Oslo public library is at the same time developing two end-user services that demonstrate and take advantage of some of the possibilities an enriched RDF representation of the library catalogue provides:

– Book Reviews. Book reviews written by librarians is a valuable resource that regrettably is often poorly utilized. The Book Reviews project has collected thousands of library book reviews, described them with RDF meta-data and linked them to the Book catalogue. In this way reviews are made easily accessible and optimized for reuse. Included in the project is the development of a web application to collect, register and distribute book reviews, an API for fetching reviews and meta-data as well as adding new reviews to the dataset, and a Wordpress plug-in for publishing blogposts as reviews directly to the API.

– Active Shelves. The active shelf is a physical touch-screen device that makes use of open source software, RFID technology, RDF data and external web service APIs to provide information about any book a library patron is curious to know more about, as well as suggesting other titles that might spur the user's interests.

For the SALAD2013 workshop we would gladly give short demonstrations of our projects on open APIs and RDF metadata, and engage in talks on the possibilities, challenges and directions of RDF as the metadata basis for producing modern user services.