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LS 566

25 September 2021

## Assignment #2: Metadata quality problems

In their article “Achieving and Maintaining Metadata Quality: Toward a Sustainable Workflow for the IDEALS Institutional Repository,” Stein, Applegate, and Robbins give a useful overview of the kinds of metadata quality problems that can occur in collections before detailing how they developed a workflow to address metadata problems in the institutional repository they manage. Here I will summarize the kinds of problems they discuss.

The authors begin by noting that there is no universally accepted definition of quality metadata before sharing Park’s proposed definition (645). Following Park, we can determine if we have quality metadata by asking if it performs “the core bibliographic functions of discovery, use, provenance, currency, authenticity, and administration,” or more generally, asking if the metadata is complete, accurate, and consistent (645). Yasser’s “five universal metadata problems” of “Incorrect Values, Incorrect Elements, Missing Information, Information Loss, and Inconsistent Value Representation” are perhaps even more useful for understanding metadata quality problems thanks to their concreteness (645-646).

Multiple sources and entry points for metadata into a system can lead to incompleteness, inaccuracy, and inconsistency. Both humans and machines can introduce these kinds of problems, and problems multiply when metadata in legacy formats like MARC are reused and when there is exchange between systems (647). Metadata from sources that use different controlled vocabularies can lead to inconsistencies, as can the lack of a name authority file (647).

There may be syntactic inconsistencies in metadata (e.g., differences in capitalization, abbreviation) as well semantic differences like the conflation of contributors and authors (659).

In addition to these technical issues, administrative challenges can also contribute to metadata quality problems. Staffing and funding are required for the creation and maintenance of quality metadata, but budget restraints can impede having adequate numbers of workers with the right tools and training to assure metadata quality (647). The authors also note that IT staff and librarians who collaborate on these types of projects belong to “different networks of practice” and thus may have challenges with communicating about their preferred tools and methods (650).

This article accomplishes one of its stated goals of addressing “theoretical issues regarding metadata quality” and serves as a thorough introduction to the kinds of problems metadata workers might encounter (645). Their details of the development of the workflow for their own institutional repository are equally interesting in proposing solutions to metadata quality problems, but discussion of that element of the article will have to wait for another day.

### Works Cited

Ayla Stein, Kelly J. Applegate & Seth Robbins (2017) Achieving and Maintaining Metadata Quality: Toward a Sustainable Workflow for the IDEALS Institutional Repository, *Cataloging & Classification Quarterly*, 55:7-8, 644-666, DOI: 10.1080/01639374.2017.1358786