

catalogs. It took weeks to trace these errors back to their source, but we eventually discovered that the old description was coming from the Library of Congress. We had changed the main description seven months prior to the publication date, based on feedback from our sales representatives and our author. Unfortunately, our CIP application had already been submitted before we made the change and the outdated description had distributed to any systems that picked up data from Library of Congress. Our managing editor submitted a correction to LoC, but the book had already been published before the correction was widely distributed.

Another issue we had was with the subtitle. We added the subtitle to the metadata late, and this caused Amazon to re-categorize the book in a completely different genre. As of this writing, six months after the error appeared, we haven't been able to get it resolved. Because Amazon maps publisher-provided metadata to its own internal SEO, we had no way of knowing this would happen and no way to undo it once it was done.

These challenges represent a fraction of the metadata mayhem we—and many publishers of all sizes—face. Because of the unpredictable nature of metadata distribution, there's only so much a publisher can do to ensure accurate categorization and positioning of their books. With the advent of social networking sites centered on reading, however, readers are in a unique position to create and share metadata for their favorite books alongside publishers. While this doesn't address all metadata challenges, it does open up a unique avenue for publishers and authors to get real-time feedback on their positioning efforts.

Social Tagging

Social tagging, the act of applying public, freeform descriptors to digital artifacts, represents reader engagement with the books that have been so carefully positioned by publishers. When