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Review of Information Resource Description: Creating and Managing Metadata

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INFORMATION RESOURCE DESCRIPTION: CREATING AND MANAGING METADATA. Philip Hider. *Chicago: ALA Editions, 2013, 220 pp., ISBN 978-0-8389-1201-0, softcover, \$99.95.*

As Philip Hider, Head of the School of Information Studies at Charles Sturt University in Australia, points out in his preface to *Information Resource Description: Creating and Managing Metadata*, this is an “Information Age.” Having information at our fingertips does not necessarily mean it is the information we need, and effective access to information can be obtained when information resources are organized. This process includes the creation and management of metadata.

I have illustrated the importance of metadata to a class of undergraduates by showing them a photograph of something not readily identifiable. The students realized that without metadata, the photograph may not be of any use or, if it was, it would not be findable when needed. This book is for those students with an interest in the detective-like nature of creating metadata and the discipline to be consistent and follow best practices and standards to make resources easier for people to find.

Beginning by defining the scope and content of the book, Hider then goes on to describe the unavoidable biases inherent in information resource description. Metadata creators’ motivations, situations, constraints and perspectives shape their description of information resources. Despite these biases, metadata serves four functions defined under FRBR (Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records). Metadata must allow users to find, identify, select, and obtain information resources, and Hider includes navigation as a fifth function.

To achieve these functions, metadata must include attributes relevant to users, and Hider discusses the possibilities. He also outlines the tools and systems dedicated to arrangement of information for efficient retrieval of resources from indexes and databases to museum registers to citation databases.

To be effective, these tools and systems rely on metadata. The roles and motivation of metadata creators including resource creators, information professionals and end-users are described in detail. Hider explains that value and quality of metadata can be achieved through functionality, comprehensiveness, accuracy, clarity and consistency. Emphasis is placed on vocabulary and authority control, best practices and quality control.

The high cost of quality metadata creation can be distributed across several institutions by sharing metadata. Hider dedicates a whole chapter to this important and widespread practice. Standardization is imperative not only to increase interoperability between systems, but also to enhance effectiveness for users. Hider describes metadata standards used by various communities, such as, libraries, museums and businesses.

He also focuses on the importance of standards of metadata values. Again, consistency is crucial, and Hider describes several controlled vocabularies used to enable metadata to exceed merely describing individual resources by allowing users to compare and contrast many resources. He argues that this may be a critical function for the future of metadata, and the final chapter focuses on the questions that arise when considering society's value of metadata and the future of information resource description.

The book includes valuable lists of figures and tables, abbreviations, further reading, and metadata standards along with a table of contents and an index. In addition to providing these useful resources, Hider does an excellent job of providing historical background, current context and future considerations for students of this field.

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