Book Reviews

Metadata
Marcia Lei Zeng & Jian Qin
Facet Publishing (2016) 2nd ed,
Review by Alan Bullimore
Contact: bullimorealan@gmail.com

Published in the UK for the first time, this book has become the major source on the topic of metadata. Metadata, arguably like the word pedagogy in the title of this journal, is a word which is frequently used and perhaps less often fully understood.

The quality of the metadata is sometimes used to explain why a library catalogue search fails to retrieve the results desired. It’s a trump card for library suppliers, as few would be able to question precisely what the phrase ‘quality of the metadata’ means. Improving the quality of the metadata remains for vast majority of us a difficult quest. This book goes a long way to redressing this issue.

Metadata, or data-about-data, is the alchemy which connects a searcher with the material they need. This book goes a long way to explaining how this alchemy works, and some of the crucial ways in which the concepts of metadata have evolved. Aimed at both students and information professionals, there are plenty of practice problems included for those implementing metadata applications.

Prior to reading this book I had always assumed that the famous Dublin core of metadata originated in Ireland rather than Ohio, but this book proves a useful historical timeline in the development of Dublin Core since its inception in 1995 to the present day.

Also invaluable in this volume is the glossary of terms associated with metadata, so that at least novices in this area know what is meant by terms such as parallel metadata (metadata in different languages) and crosswalk (compatibility of metadata sets)

Taking my first baby-steps in metadata concepts I particularly appreciated the examples from sources such as iTunes. What exactly is the best metadata method for describing a particular album track? Experienced practitioners would no doubt find this a most straightforward process, but would no doubt benefit from the numerous case studies included here.

The 35 page reference list must form a fairly comprehensive bibliography on the subject, albeit one which is being added to all the time. It is a little surprising that the index to the book is a comparatively brief 20 pages, although this is not a major issue since the structure of each chapter is so well defined. A list of the numerous acronyms which are used might also have been helpful. Graphically, however a very pleasing volume, with tables and diagrams to produce a pleasing format, this book is likely to be a metadata building block for years to come.