

Web-scale discovery systems are becoming increasingly common in libraries and this book aims to show librarians how to get the most out of these systems through the management of metadata. Products such as Primo (Ex Libris), Summon (ProQuest), EBSCO Discovery Service and OCLC WorldCat are highlighted, but most of the discussions focus on discovery systems in general. The contributors have a range of expertise meaning the book covers many different aspects. Each chapter is designed to be read independently so there is a certain amount of crossover and repetition but this often serves to emphasise important points and arguments.

The introduction provides a useful brief history of the development of library catalogues towards web-scale discovery systems which sets up the rest of the book well. It explains how the “Google effect” has changed the way people search for information on the internet and affected user expectations of search and discovery in the library. The scale of managing the huge variety of resources held in discovery systems and their differing metadata is a major challenge and I felt this was discussed successfully.

Some technical aspects of managing and sharing metadata are explored, with the volume of resources available today meaning sharing is now crucial. After covering metadata mapping and systems such as FTP, the conclusion was for a focus on collaboration and decentralisation rather than local enhancements benefiting only a single catalogue. This is followed by a chapter about linked open data and the opportunities it provides for libraries. It was interesting to learn about the leading projects, primarily from national libraries, and see some real examples of linked open data sets. Big data, the Semantic Web and BIBFRAME are also covered but nothing gets too complicated, making it a great introduction to this area.

One chapter focuses on academic libraries and how they handle the amount of content and metadata in their discovery systems. This is then compared with Google Scholar, arguably their biggest competitor, creating a fascinating look at how library systems compare with the corporate giant used by so many. There is then a detailed discussion of the relationship between libraries and vendors, and in particular the difficulties that often occur.

The final chapter focuses on the social features of discovery systems, especially user-generated metadata such as tags and reviews. It goes through a number of studies showing the possibilities of user tags and suggests that these can enhance the existing metadata in library catalogues by adding natural language alongside controlled vocabularies. The chapter concludes that user-generated metadata in discovery systems has not yet reached its full potential. This was one area that I had not previously considered but this chapter caught my attention and left me intrigued as to how it will develop.

This book was an interesting read and made me think in more detail about the metadata I create. Altogether it was clear, as obvious as it may sound, that metadata is crucial to discovery. The performance of discovery systems and the accuracy of their results depends on the available metadata, but there can be huge differences in its structure, quality and completeness. By looking at a range of aspects the book showed the bigger picture of what happens in web-scale discovery systems and ultimately how users find information.

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