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Representation of Atypical Resources in the Discovery Layer: Metadata and Cataloging Aspects

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For a discovery layer to function, there has to be a means to the discovery. It's the metadata in the records loaded into the layer that allows for this.

Records can come from a library's online catalog or other repository. They also can be created by the provider of the content accessed in the discovery layer.

The University of South Florida has all the content in the online catalog loaded into its discovery layer. FALSC, the statewide library automation agency, loads updates into the layer each night and provides a full reload once a week.

This includes the traditional monographs and serials, but also maps, audio-visual, image collections, and databases. While maps are mostly cataloged at the item level, other atypical resources have only collection-level records

This means there are no records in the catalog for individual items in the collection or database. In some instances, the discovery layer can provide access to these resources.

Serials are usually cataloged at the title level, with access to individual articles available through the discovery layer. Access to atypical resources, such as individual statistical tables in Data-Planet, is available if the metadata is provided to the discovery service.

Metadata for resources not in a library's catalog is created for the discovery layer by the provider of the content. Quality of the metadata varies.

The more high-quality metadata provided for each item, the better the retrieval results delivered to the searcher.

NISO has established best practices for content providers regarding metadata in its report “Open Discovery Initiative: Promoting Transparency in Discovery” available at https://groups.niso.org/apps/group_public/download.php/14820/rp-19-2014_ODI.pdf

The report lists core metadata elements to be provided, as well as enriched content to improve the discovery experience for users.

NISO's core metadata elements for providers to include in records:

Title

Author

Publisher

Date

Item ID

Item URL

Content Type

Enriched content recommended by NISO to include in records:

Keywords

Full text (for print) or transcript (for audio/video)

Abstract (for text) or description (non-print)

Some atypical resources have metadata available, but they are not found in the discovery layer. The metadata is created by the library hosting the items and is siloed in an institutional repository. Since records from these repositories are not usually loaded into the discovery layer, they cannot be found by patrons searching there.

The University of South Florida has digitized many of its Special Collections items. Atypical resources, such as the various photograph collections dating back to the late 19th century, have item-level metadata only in the Sobek CM digital repository. Thus, someone searching only in the discovery layer will not find these photos.

The solution obviously is to get these items loaded into the discovery layer so they can be found there.

USF has tried to get Digital Collections in its Sobek repository into the discovery layer, but results have been inconsistent.

The discovery layer is promoted as a more “Google-like” search interface that will be familiar to regular Internet users.

Based on the belief this type of search is what patrons want, libraries are marketing the discovery layer as the preferred means of search.

In some cases, the discovery layer as constituted can meet patron research needs. But it should not give the impression that the results retrieved are all the results available.

A quote from NISO:

“The trend toward index-based discovery requires cooperation between content providers, discovery service providers, and libraries to ensure that the broadest spectrum of materials can be fully exposed through discovery platforms.”

--NISO, Open Discovery Initiative, page 15.

Working together to solve the problems of access can make the “one-stop search” ideal closer to reality.