

Everyone a Curator: Evaluating the Impact of “Social Metadata” on Libraries, Archives and Museums

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Abstract: Metadata helps users locate resources that meet their specific needs. But metadata also helps us to understand the data we find and helps us to evaluate what we should spend our time evaluating. Traditionally, staff at libraries, archives, and museums (LAMs) create metadata for the content they manage. However, *social metadata* -- content contributed by users -- is evolving as a way to both augment and re-contextualize the content and metadata created by LAMs. Enriching LAM metadata improves the quality and relevancy of users' search results and helps people to understand and to evaluate the content better.

In 2009-2010, a 21-member RLG Partner Social Metadata Working Group from five countries reviewed 76 sites relevant to libraries, archives, and museums that supported such social media features as tagging, comments, reviews, images, videos, ratings, recommendations, lists, links to related articles, etc. The working group analyzed the results of a survey sent to site managers and discussed the factors that contribute to successful—and not so successful—use of social metadata. The working group considered issues related to assessment, content, policies, technology, and vocabularies.

I will present a brief overview of the major findings from the three reports (forthcoming) produced by the working group. These reports consist of: an environmental scan of sites and third-party hosted social media sites relevant to libraries, archives, and museums; analysis of the results from a survey of site managers (conducted in October-November 2009); and recommendations on social metadata features most relevant to libraries, archives, and museums.

About the author:

Helice Koffler is currently Manuscripts and Special Collections Materials Cataloging Librarian with the University of Washington Libraries. She has worked at a variety of libraries, archives, and museums, including the New York Public Library, King County Archives, New York University and the American Museum of Natural History. She received a B.A. (Art History and English) and M.A. (English) from Hunter College of the City University of New York, as well as an M.L.I.S. from the Palmer School of Library & Information Science, Long Island University. Active in numerous library and archives professional organizations, Helice is also a Certified Archivist.