The Missing Link: Where Are We With Linked Data?

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Abstract

The promise of a semantic web that would break down the walls separating galleries, libraries, archives, and museums (GLAM) is nearly twenty years old, going back to Tim Berners-Lee in 2006. Linked data promises to improve discovery of resources by linking information across repositories, institutions, national borders, and platforms. While there has been significant progress toward implementing linked open data, repositories overall have been slow to adopt it, in some cases even reverting back from implementations to more traditional data structures.

In this presentation, we share findings from a study conducted in Fall of 2024 assessing the uptake of linked data technologies for cultural heritage description in archives and allied professions. The survey received over 500 responses from a broad spectrum of occupations, including researchers, data managers, software developers, archivists, librarians, curators, consultants, and more. Respondents from 27 countries--chiefly from North America but including colleagues from every continent--shared their experiences with us.

We will present our findings regarding users' experiences with linked-data discovery for the very first time, sharing a rich snapshot of how Linked Data is being used to describe or discover resources across constituencies. We identify perceptions on added value or pain points and infer risks and opportunities for further development in the areas of domain modeling and software development.

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