

Getting the Word Out

Making Digital Project Metadata Available to Aggregators

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WebWise 2006

“Physical institutions, used to a mindset in which they draw visitors inside for a protracted visit, apply the same model to their online presence. They ignore the fact that these visitors are often after a piece of information and that, once found, they want to move on. They ignore the fact that visitors might want contextualising pieces that are inevitably drawn from resources held in more than one institution. They ignore the fact that our catalogues are invariably awful things to work with. They ignore the fact that it doesn't have to be *them* who make the content available online ... and that someone else might conceivably be doing it better.” --Paul Miller, *Talis*

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Competing for Eyeballs

- What are the options?
 - The “Library” model
 - “Search and ye shall find”--very little marketing
 - The “Exhibit” model
 - Heavy on context, marketing very time-based
 - Usually builds on strengths of a particular institution
 - The Physical Bookstore model
 - Genre-based, heavy on the eye-candy
 - The Online Bookstore model
 - Collects user data for recommendations

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- “Digital collection development has now moved to a third stage, where even serving information effectively to a known constituency is not sufficient. As the digital environment itself has matured to become a critical and often primary vehicle for delivering information to the vast majority of people, integration and trust have emerged as critical criteria for digital collection building. ... Objects, metadata, and collections must now be viewed not only within the context of the projects that created them but as building blocks that others can reuse, repackage, and build services upon. Indicators of goodness must now emphasize factors contributing to interoperability, reusability, persistence, verification, documentation, and support for intellectual property rights.”

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Aggregation as Marketing Strategy

- Consider bookstore displays and general search engines: both are examples of aggregators
- “Long Tail” marketing emphasizes niche materials and integrated access
 - Generalized outlets
 - Filtering
 - Linking and recommendation (“if you liked that, you’ll also like this”)

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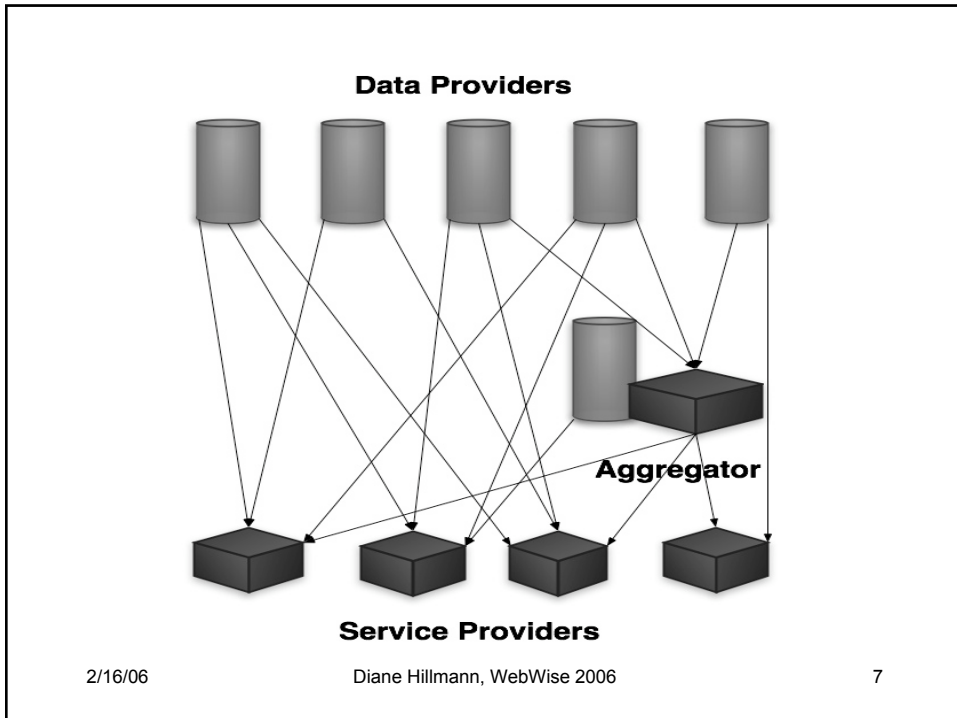
Aggregators Provide Services

- Gather together information from various sources about resources
- Normalize information
- Add information and reviews (or usage data)
- Index content
- Provide content cache
- Support “re-purposing” in different communities

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An Example

- Aggregator A harvests data from Museum F
 - Normalizes formats
 - Sends data to Service that adds topical information using machine process; reharvests
 - Makes data available to service that aligns with curriculum; reharvests
- Makes normalized and augmented data available to others (including original source)

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Quality Metadata the Key

- Most problems related to:
 - Missing data
 - Incorrect data
 - Confusing data
 - Insufficient data
- Aggregators can help solve some, not all, these problems

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Obstacles

- Notion of metadata as “asset” with resistance to sharing
- Reluctance to give up “control” of presentation within a bespoke portal
- Technical barriers to OAI implementation
- Lack of guarantee that the strategy will work
- Worry that funders won’t approve and might not continue funding

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Checklist for Aggregator-Ready Metadata

- Make your data available in a variety of formats
 - OAI-PMH *requires* only Simple DC, not adequate for many services
- Generalize your context
 - Context provided in your local portal may not be available to others
- Expose your use of standard vocabularies
 - Don't rely on OAI sets to express topicality

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Checklist, cont.

- Manage your metadata to enforce consistency
 - Even incorrect but consistent data can be improved
- Document your practices
 - Provide a page that explains how your data is created and managed
 - Make local vocabularies available

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Join the Party!

- Libraries and Museums have long relied on collaboration and sharing to overcome gaps in funding
- Aggregators are very similar to bibliographic utilities in the metadata world
- More data and more good resources make better services possible!

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