Identifying Thesauri Selections of Repositories of Digitized Medieval Manuscript Collections

Methodology

In order to capture element-specific thesauri usage for each surveyed repository, a survey was created that could be custom-tailored to each subject institution and their particular metadata records. In addition to general questions about institutional identity and general metadata creation and maintenance, the survey provided a platform in which surveyed parties could identify their thesauri usage by either selecting from a list of commonly used thesauri or by indicating what alternate thesauri are used. Additionally, the survey featured open-ended questions regarding the reason for selecting the indicated thesauri, thereby providing additional depth to the responses provided in terms of institutional needs, goals, and preferences.

Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thesauri Usage by Metadata Type</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thesauri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TGM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AAT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LCSH</td>
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<tr>
<td>Internal Thesauri</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reported Reasons for Thesauri Selection

- Thesauri selected by database developer (medieval art PhD)
- Selected to maintain continuity with other records in online catalog
- Consider LOC thesauri to be standard
- Interoperability available through LOC thesauri
- Domain specificity offered by Art & Architecture Thesaurus
- Thesauri compatible with metadata schema (MARC, MARC21, MODS, DublinCore)
- Selection made in order to facilitate searching by form/genre to the satisfaction of repository
- Developed internal thesauri because acceptable resources were otherwise unavailable

Conclusions

- Institutional implementations of Library of Congress thesauri (TGM, NAF, LCSH) among the highest reported, followed by Getty’s AAT and internally-developed thesauri.
- In light of reported reasons for implementation, thesauri use is similar to the findings of Park & Tosaka (2010) that highlight the importance of both comprehensive thesauri and domain-specific thesauri. Interoperability and broad adoption were also important.
- Usage of thesauri with regards to metadata types reveals that thesauri are used as descriptive resources for a wide variety of metadata values.

- Reports of internal thesauri implementation demonstrated that existing thesauri do not meet all institutional needs. Most frequent usage by metadata type (Provenance, Agent, Object Data) illustrate that available thesauri do not provide the domain-specificity needed by such narrowly focused digital collections.
- Knowledge management appears to be a considerable concern for responding institutions. Comments regarding thesauri selection and implement by staff members who are no longer present were observed.
- A larger sample group is needed to achieve more statistically-meaningful results.

Works Cited


Citation for the Illustrations