Implementing Shareable Metadata Practices in a Diverse University Environment

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An vision for shareable metadata

- **Many robust discovery environments that can easily exchange diverse metadata**
- **Needs**
  - Machine-readable descriptive metadata
  - Definition of properties of shareable metadata in various communities
  - Protocols and systems that use them for sharing
- **…and online delivery of content too, but let's not get too far ahead of ourselves**

Challenges for archives

- "Archives" not a homogeneous body so a single workflow likely not possible
- Expanding view of mission
- Finding the resources
    - Appropriate description
    - Technical implementation

Challenges for digital libraries

- Digital library practice assumes content digitized
  - Metadata-only workflows not common
- Digital library practice assumes item-level description
  - In University DL departments
  - In metadata aggregations
- Concepts of provenance and original order are largely foreign

Communities need to agree on a key definition

- EAD is not a metadata format.
- EAD *is* a markup language.
  - It marks up the finding aid as a *document*
  - A finding aid is a narrative, not just an inventory
  - The structure of finding aids can vary among diverse collections

The good news

- Aggregations not intended to *replace* archives-focused discovery mechanisms, but rather to *supplement* them
- General-purpose aggregations therefore do not need to make use of all the nuances of archival description
- Your local environment can provide the robust services you want
  - Provenance/original order information
  - Interpretation of resources
  - Mediation of access

Key shareable metadata principles for archives

- **Context**
  - Need enough so that the user of an aggregation can make a decision about whether or not to follow a link to the local environment
  - Too much repeated information can pose challenges for the aggregation and the user
- **Content**
  - What is the appropriate granularity for shared records from archives?

Some possible strategies

- Collection-level records only
- Aggregators that understand multi-level description
- Design multi-level description carefully for future item/file-level view
- Link to digital object from the lowest level of description in finding aid, and use external system to provide more granular description
- Describe at the item level

Experiences at IU (1)

- ## New EAD site
  <http://www.dlib.indiana.edu/collections/findingaids/>

  - New system more faithful to encoding, with less "helpful" fixed presentation

  - Mutual learning process about archival descriptive practices

  - Many decisions made about when encoding should be changed and when system should be changed

  - Results of this process: re-engineering! New template, report card, better previewing capability

Experiences at IU (2)

- Some EAD files link to digital objects (more soon).

- Soon, item-level OAI records (DC and MODS) for digitized items from finding aids

- Central DL repository that allows EAD as the master metadata format

- Workflow that allows links from any level of a multi-level description in EAD

What archives in Universities can do

- **Put more materials online**

- **Lobby software vendors for better support of EAD**

- **Discuss**
  - Need for archives-specific aggregators
  - Need for multi-level description

- **Share**
  - OAI
  - ArchiveGrid
  - Federated Search
  - EAC Authority Records!!!

Learning from one another

- Item-centric view can be too narrow, but can help the re-engineering process

- More structure in finding aids can be a good thing

- Archives can show libraries why expertise in descriptive practice is still necessary

Thank you!

- Jenn Riley, jenlrile@indiana.edu

- These presentation slides:
  <http://www.dlib.indiana.edu/~jenlrile/presentations/saa2007/>

- Metadata For You & Me: A Training Program for Shareable Metadata
  <http://images.library.uiuc.edu/projects/mym/>