



Technically Speaking

The Newsletter of CATS

Spring/Summer 2009

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“Beyond the Clouds”: Social Tagging

By **Ted Gutmann**

On May 7, CATS sponsored a program at the Long Island Library Conference titled “Looking Beyond the Clouds: Enhancing Library Services through Social Tagging,” presented by Emily Clasper of Suffolk Cooperative Library System.

Although users of services such as Twitter, Flickr and Delicious may find tagging to be second nature by this time, many of us are still not quite sure what it is that tagging represents. Tagging is starting to show up now in many places that librarians might not expect to see it—on the New York Times website for instance, or on the online version of the Suffolk County Catalog. The bottom line is that tagging is here to stay, and while it does have its drawbacks, it also has a number

of positive features.

Emily did a good job of explaining how all of this fits in to a librarian’s world. She started by explaining the differences between a taxonomy (we’re all familiar with how this works) and a folksonomy (this is where tagging comes into play). Whereas taxonomy is authoritative, hierarchical, and highly structured, folksonomy has no formal struc-

—cont’d on page 2

Technically Speaking’s Featured Quotation

“Adage for critical catalogers: No matter who cataloged it first, try to make it better. (You usually can.)”

—Sanford Berman, writing in the *U*A*B*A*S*H*E*D Librarian*, No. 149 (2008)

Presidential 'Meowsings'

By Ted Gutmann

I think that it's important that those of us involved with implementing technology in our libraries have a venue to share and learn. There's no need to "re-invent the wheel" each time we introduce a new product or service. Very often, one of our colleagues has already gone through the same process, and can make our job easier by sharing his or her experiences. With that in mind, CATS has established a new Technology Information Forum committee. The committee will host regular meetings where I.T. staff can come together to share and discuss, face-to-face, some of the things that they're working on in their libraries—similar to what we're already doing for our catalogers with the CATS Cataloging Roundtable meetings. The first official meeting of the group will take place on Thursday, July 16 at the Half Hollow Hills Community Library (Dix Hills facility) at 10 a.m. We hope to see you there. Be sure to visit our website regularly (<http://cats.suffolk.lib.ny.us>) for information about future meetings.

There's currently a lot of

talk in the library community regarding open source software. But exactly how does it fit in? Should you be implementing it in your library? Is it good enough to replace your existing applications? Is it really free? In an effort to address these questions and others, we are planning a number of programs that hopefully will give you the facts you need to make informed choices for your library. We're looking ahead to October for our first program, with others to follow. Again, check our website for current information.

Please consider getting involved with the Computer and Technical Services division of SCLA. We're always looking for fresh faces and ideas. We hold our annual board elections in the fall. If you're interested in serving on the CATS board, send me an email at cats@suffolk.lib.ny.us. However, you don't have to be a board member to be involved. Regular members can participate too. For example, right now, Michael Aloï from Dowling College serves as the coordinator for our Cataloging Roundtable meetings, and Tom Cohn from Huntington Public Library serves as our newsletter editor. Although neither of the two is currently serving on the board, they both make important contributions to the division, and I

for one certainly appreciate their efforts.

A membership application is available online.

Editor's Note:

CATS will offer an electronic-only delivery option for *Technically Speaking* starting with the Fall/Winter issue. If interested, contact Editor Tom Cohn (Tcohn@suffolk.lib.ny.us).

—*Social tagging (cont'd)*

ture, is user-generated and evolves out of consensus. As information professionals, we probably tend to think that detailed, controlled, structured descriptions are the way to go, but that might not always be the case. We all know of the difficulties that users can have to use a controlled vocabulary such as Library of Congress subject headings. Although keyword searching can help with that, it's not always enough. A user-generated set of tags could make it much easier for library users to find what they're looking for using vocabulary they're familiar with.

Another important reason to consider turning to user-generated tags to describe online content has to do with the tremendous amount of new information being added to the web all of the time. Each week, millions of new messages, videos, and

pictures are added to millions of sites by users from all around the world. There is simply no way for an authoritative body to classify all of this new information. Thus, enabling content creators to classify their own information, while perhaps not a perfect solution, at least provides some means of intelligent description.

Emily finished up her presentation with a discussion of some of the emerging trends in tagging. These include “automanual folksonomies” (combining automated and manual tagging), geo-tagging, and mobile tagging. Altogether, it was an excellent and thought-provoking session, presented to an audience of approximately 150. Please visit the CATS website (<http://cats.suffolk.lib.ny.us>) for a link to Emily’s Power Point presentation.

RDA’s Debut By Mellissa Hinton

As our country’s new president was taking the oath of office in Washington on January 20, an audience of seventeen people was inaugurated into the brave new world of Resource Description and Access (RDA), an issue of interest to many CATS members. At a Nylink Brown Bag Discussion held at the Farmingdale



Above, L to R: CATS President Ted Gutmann, Vice President Bob Johnson, and Board Member Laura Giuliani at the Long Island Library Conference. Right: Raffle winner Laurene Tesoriero with her prize, a Sony nav-u GPS device.



Public Library, Lynne Graziadei, Nylink Member Services Librarian, provided an overview of RDA, outlined the history of its development, presented several sections of the still-in-progress work as examples, and sought feedback from the audience.

Successor to the book-centered and now outdated AACR2, RDA has been developed to better describe various formats in new media in addition to traditional print resources. A joint venture of the American Library Association, the Canadian Library As-

sociation, and the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals, RDA is projected for publication in the third quarter of this year. RDA in its finished form (and it is still far from finished!) will be available as a subscription database. Streamlined versions in print will eventually be available for smaller libraries where the need for access to the complete database is less essential.

RDA has been designed to enhance the end user experience—*cont’d on page 4.*

Upcoming Technology Information Forum meetings:
 Thu, July 16: Half Hollow Hills (Dix Hills building)
 Thu, Sept. 3 : Connetquot P. L.
 Thu, Oct 1 : Middle County Public Library (Selden building)
 Thu, November 5 : East Hampton Library
 Thu, December 3 : Sayville Library
 Next Cataloging Roundtable:
 Tuesday, October 13th.

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ence in finding, identifying, selecting, and obtaining resources. As an example of the user-friendly quality inherent in RDA, Lynne pointed out that most abbreviations have been eliminated from records. Although abbreviations were essential in the print world where descriptive information had to fit within the confines of a 3 x 5 card, the electronic environment of recordkeeping does not warrant such restraints.

Since RDA is built upon the FRBR (“functional requirements for bibliographic records”) model, Lynne also

gave a quick recap of FRBR essentials: work, expression, manifestation, and item. From that framework, RDA records are structured in two parts: attributes (the descriptive elements) and relationships (corporate bodies and subjects, for example). While RDA is compatible with AACR2, there are a number of differences and Lynne highlighted several major ones. For instance, while classes of materials are used under AACR2, elements are needed for description under RDA. A cited difference that provoked a great deal of discus-

sion (much of it dissatisfaction) from the audience was the replacement of the general material designation (GMD) with three different elements: media, carrier, and content type.

The Nylink brown bag session proved to be an informative overview of the impending changes to description and access. To assist potential users in becoming acclimated to RDA, Lynne provided a number of links to web resources. The FAQ page of the Joint Steering Committee for Development of RDA at <http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/jsc/rdafaq.html#7> is an ideal starting point.