discovery project review

Contextual Wrappers
http://cul-comet.blogspot.com

Contextual Wrappers was funded by JISC to improve access to collections that support research and education. This document is part of a series that describes the lessons from 8 JISC projects funded under the Discovery programme in 2011 to explore open metadata for libraries, museums and archives. More information about the projects can be found at: http://www.jisc.ac.uk/whatwedo/programmes/inf11/infrastructureforresourcediscovery.aspx
The other documents in the series can be found at: http://discovery.ac.uk

Background

The project is concerned with the effectiveness of resource discovery based on metadata relating to the Designated collections at the Fitzwilliam Museum in the University of Cambridge and made available through the Culture Grid, an aggregation service for museums, libraries and archives metadata. The project will investigate whether Culture Grid interface and API can be enhanced to allow researchers and others to explore and browse hierarchical relationships between collections and object records.

Institution	Fitzwilliam Museum, University of Cambridge
Responsible group	Contextual Wrappers involved a partnership between three organisations; the Fitzwilliam Museum[1], the Collections Trust's Culture Grid[2], and technology provider Knowledge Integration[3].
Capacity	The technical work undertaken within Contextual Wrappers complements and extends existing development and support activity at Knowledge Integration, on behalf of the Culture Grid.
Data Scope	Contextual Wrappers explores the value that lightweight collection descriptions may offer the Culture Grid, both providing pointers to richer item descriptions and offering some high-level data in situations where more detailed item-level records are not available.
Data Scale	The Fitzwilliam Museum provided over 1,000 new item-level records to Culture Grid, and created or enriched 50 collection-level descriptions.

Mechanics

Formats – data formats and standards

The Contextual Wrappers project relied upon earlier work on Collection Description, specifically the Research Support Libraries Programme's (RSLP) Collection Description Schema[4] and the People's Network Discovery Service (PNDS) Dublin Core Application Profile . The Open Archives Initiative's Protocol for Metadata Harvesting (OAI-PMH[5]) was used to harvest metadata from the Fitzwilliam for ingest into Culture Grid. Contextual Wrappers resulted in an enhanced model for collection descriptions within Culture Grid, including the ability to allow different institutions to apply their own rules governing the mandatory or optional nature of various fields, the use of schemas, etc.

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[1] http://www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk

[2] http://www.culturegrid.org.uk

[3] http://www.k-int.com

[4] http://www.ukoln.ac.uk/metadata/rslp/schema

[5] http://www.openarchives.org/OAI/openarchivesprotocol.html

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Enhancement – authority standardisation

Contextual Wrappers enabled the team at Knowledge Integration to enhance tools already used within Culture Grid to create collection descriptions. One important enhancement created more explicit links between collection description metadata and any pre-existing schema or terminology that may have been used in creating the record. As the Contextual Wrappers final report[6] notes, "The CG admin interface enables specification of data type, obligation, and cardinality and vocabulary for each data element for each data provider."

The Fitzwilliam makes use of locally amended versions of widely deployed thesauri, specifically the Art & Architecture Thesaurus (AAT) and Union List of Artist Names (ULAN). Although valuable when describing items, the project found that they were not as useful for describing collections. A more generic terminology such as the Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH) may prove more useful in the long term.

Usability – reusability re- access and format

Data created during Contextual Wrappers is available within the Culture Grid site[7] itself, and may also be reused via the evolving Culture Grid API[8].

Impact

Licensing

Contextual Wrappers follows existing practice within the broader Culture Grid[9], using the most restrictive Creative Commons Licence - complete with its prohibition of commercial reuse - Attribution Non Commercial Share Alike[10].

Outcome – Is it embedded and sustainable?

Item metadata and collection descriptions produced during Contextual Wrappers are available for use and reuse within the Culture Grid. Tools developed during the project are also being incorporated into the main Culture Grid service, and will be deployed and maintained as part of that ongoing effort.

Lessons Learned

- Manually created collection descriptions may act as useful signposts, helping visitors to navigate through the rich complexity created by large numbers of item level descriptions.
- Although a number of thesauri and terminologies are widely used within the museum sector, there is a tendency to modify these to meet local requirements. This creates opportunities for confusion and incompatibility when records from different sources are merged in a service such as the Culture Grid.
- Services in the museum sector seem more cautious with respect to licensing than libraries or archives. However, recent moves by Europeana[11] and others suggest a growing willingness to tackle the question of licensing.

See Also

- **Culture Grid** - http://www.culturegrid.org.uk. "A new and unique online service from the Collections Trust helping to open up UK [museum, predominantly] collections for the benefit of everyone."

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[6] http://context.collectionstrustblogs.org.uk/2011/08/16/final-report

[7] http://www.culturegrid.org.uk

[8] http://www.culturegrid.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/Culture-Grid-search-service-v2.pdf (PDF)

[9] http://context.collectionstrustblogs.org.uk/2011/06/24/licensing

[10] http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0

[11] http://www.europeana.eu

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