Cultural Institutions in a Networked Environment

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David Bearman and Jennifer Trant
Partners, Archives & Museum Informatics
www.archimuse.com

Archives, Libraries and Museums

• “memory institutions”
  – in use as early as 1975: G.E. Burcaw, Introduction to museum work (Nashville).
  – also called “cultural repositories”
• Grouped together as providers of source materials in the digital library
• Places with ‘cultural stuff’
## Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Collection</th>
<th>Collection Development</th>
<th>Interpretive Approach</th>
<th>Nature of Experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Archives</strong></td>
<td>Record series - unique and evidential</td>
<td>Most disposed; few retained records selected and managed</td>
<td>Organizational context</td>
<td>Individual / Browsing -&gt; visit reading room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Museums</strong></td>
<td>Artefacts / Specimens - original and representative</td>
<td>Individually chosen, rarely deaccessioned</td>
<td>Curatorial narrative</td>
<td>Social / Visit -&gt; go to exhibit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Libraries</strong></td>
<td>Publication - copies</td>
<td>Dynamic collections, regularly culled</td>
<td>Abstract subject classification</td>
<td>Personal / Searching -&gt; check out book</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## AML: Similarities

- Collections of source materials often related to similar subjects
- Used research, education and enjoyment
- Held in the public trust
- Interpreted in support of education
AML: Digital Similarities

- Institutional collections presented in one networked space
- Shared technological challenges in digitization (preservation, born digital, knowledge representation, metadata management)
- Shared data formats (text, image, sound, multimedia, GIS …)
- Similar user expectations for seamless access in the ‘networked society’

Challenges

- Traditional Business Methods don’t support Users’ Research Processes
  - Met needs of particular institution types
    - Library-item shared cataloging
    - Archival Finding Aids
    - Museum systems specific to individual collections
  - Documentation and record-keeping structures evolved from internal needs
  - Repositioned in the networked environment (not always successfully)
    - Web-based catalogues
    - Dublin Core descriptions
Users never did understand the methods

- "Margaret Lawrence Fonds"
  “She must have got married…”
  Wendy Duff (University of Toronto) User Study
- “looking for Mr. Rococco”
  CIMI user study reported by Jane Sledge
- World War I
  isn’t a heading in the Library Subject Catalog
  • see the “Great War”

Metadata

- Reflects professional, disciplinary and subject perspectives
- Rarely maps to users’ vocabularies or points of view
- Focuses on Discovery rather than Uses
- Emphasizes description of object-in-hand rather than interpretive context
Users’ Views are…

- Independent of Individual Users
  - same person may have different points of view, levels of expertise and requirements
- Dictated by Uses
  - teaching a class tomorrow
  - identifying source material for further scholarly study
  - analysing results of research findings
  - researching my ancestors
- Informed by their place in the research process
Simple View of Relationships
Users and Repositories

An Integrated View

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Promising Approaches

- Knowledge Representation and Navigation
  - XML, RDF and the Semantic Web (W3C initiative)
- Reference Models
  - BAC, OAIS
  - CIDOC Relational and O-O Models (CRM)
  - MPEG-7 metadata, ABC
- Metadata Harvesting
  - Dublin Core, OAI (Open Archives Initiative), RSS (RDF syndication services)

Changing Professional Roles

- Interdisciplinary Collaboration & Team Work
- Changing Organizational Structures
  - Collaborations across departments and institutions
- Integration of external knowledge sources
  - Linking to other resources
- Scalability and adaptability critical
Management Methods

- Clear definition of requirements
- Articulated business plans
- Concrete measures of success
- Risk analysis at all stages
- Willingness to adjust to feedback and changing circumstances
- Ongoing evaluation and communication

Repositioning

- Embrace new technologies
- Create new alliances
- Adopt new business models
- Exploit strengths of different institutional types
  - let libraries provide access, museums do interpretation, archives provide evidence