

Werk

Titel: Session II: Organizing Multimedia Collections

Autor: Thomas, Sarah

Ort: Graz

Jahr: 1995

PURL: https://resolver.sub.uni-goettingen.de/purl?514854804_0005|log42

Kontakt/Contact

[Digizeitschriften e.V.](#)
SUB Göttingen
Platz der Göttinger Sieben 1
37073 Göttingen

✉ info@digizeitschriften.de

Session II: Organizing Multimedia Collections

SARAH THOMAS

Director of Cataloging, Moderator

The Library of Congress's cataloging procedures are based on Charles Cutter's *Rules for a Printed Dictionary Catalog* (1904). Those rules of organization may or may not be applicable in the modern, digital library environment.

The original purpose of a catalog was to enable a person to find a book by author, title, or subject, to show what a library had, and to empower a person to choose a book based on this information. The catalog worked for books and serials, but was less effective for other materials. Those other materials now can be incorporated into the digital environment. Technology can help the Library find new strategies to access such materials.

Challenges in Cataloging

As libraries organize their multimedia collections, a number of questions must be addressed:

- What technologies are available to identify, describe, and analyze digitized collections of multimedia materials?
- How can libraries reduce the human resources investment in collection analysis and in handling of materials?
- What is the value that the library expert can add to the organization of this material?
- What should the goals of technology be, and what should librarians and experts be contributing?
- Should the Library take published indexes to material in its collections and build from them?
- How can technology help the Library transcend or encompass the various perspectives of specialists and generalists who will consult the collections?

- What advances are there in the use of non-standard character sets that can increase access to materials in non-western languages?
- What organizations have similar problems?

Participants discussed the organization of collections of material such as photographs. The Library of Congress traditionally provides general access to photographs.

Few interpretations are provided. Users, therefore, must decide how photographs are to be interpreted and used.

Photographic Resources: Strategies for Searching and Public Input

The Library must determine how much involvement is needed to describe and index photographs. Photo files could be searched by criteria such as the printing medium or the subject of the photo, but most searching of photographs is best done by browsing. One participant pointed out that photo searching often involves nonverbal criteria. Photo database services provide such searching for a fee. If the Library becomes more involved in photo indexing, it might be seen as competing with this industry.

The Library of Congress generally does not try to interpret photos, but rather provides the images and lets users make their own interpretations. When the Library first created a video disk for photographs, it included 25,000 negatives from the Detroit Publishing Company with no cataloging data. Users browsed through the images, but then they wanted to know what was in the image. That created a problem. In many cases, the subject matter of photos and the categories of subjects can be identified only by the human intervention of catalogers and subject specialists. Providing the images without cataloging data or captions might not meet the needs of Library users.

The University of California's Computer Science Department is working on alternative strategies for searching massive textual databases using loosely structured queries. Use of such a strategy for searching photo collections is dependent on someone writing brief descriptions of the photographs, but it could provide an alternative indexing option.

If more indexing is needed, there are several ways to get the public more involved in the digitization process. Photos are often scanned and uploaded by individual users to the Internet. Users of these photos then upload their own descriptions of the photos, providing rudimentary material for potential searching. One suggestion is that once the Library disseminates its files, researchers could add their own comments to the photo database. Some comments would be valuable; others are likely cataloging, but could provide an alternate indexing strategy. The consensus among conference participants was

that if local input was allowed, the system should have two regions for data storage: a region with images and descriptions approved by the Library of Congress; and a region in which users are on their own and understand that the data might not be officially sanctioned.

Finding Aids

As digital collections grow, libraries will seek creative ways to use finding aids to add value to those electronic holdings. Searches are useful only if users can find the material they are seeking. Therefore, new ways of cataloging must be explored. Many of the items in the Library of Congress's special collections do not lend themselves to traditional cataloging but are best described in a few sentences with the description then searched as full-text.

As an electronic system grows, the search criteria and the success rates tend to diminish, according to one participant. The Library, therefore, must be careful about adding excessive descriptive information to be used for searches. The consensus among the participants was that if the Library of Congress could make the raw digital data available, research into new searching technologies would follow.