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Linked Data for Cultural Heritage

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LINKED DATA FOR CULTURAL HERITAGE. Edited by Jones, Ed and Seikel, Michele. Chicago: American Library Association, 2016, 134pp. ISBN 978-0-8389-1439-7.

Linked data is a way of structuring and publishing data in a way that makes it more useful through semantic queries. Editor Ed Jones, in his introduction to this book, states that in its simplest form linked data “uses the resource description framework and is expressed as three-part statements called triples, each triple consisting of a subject ... a predicate ... and the object” (x). Linked open data, as Jones notes, is a “work in progress” with much of the advancement taking place in libraries, archives, and museums (xiii). Still, there does not yet exist a “killer app” that is going to make linked data more widely used (xiv).

Each of the book’s six chapters has been contributed by experts in linked data from organizations such as OCLC, the W3C, Elsevier, and the Library of Congress. Chapter 1, “Linked Open Data and the Cultural Heritage Landscape,” briefly describes several arts and humanities projects from around the world that utilize linked data. Of personal interest was the authors’ extensive description of their own endeavor, the Linked Jazz project. Chapter 2, “Making MARC Agnostic,” discusses the migration of the English Short Title Catalog from traditional MARC to a linked data format. In Chapter 3, “Authority Control for the Web,” the author examines library thesauri, metadata schemas, and information discovery and how library practice and linked data are integrated using controlled vocabularies. Chapter 4, “Linked Data Implications for Authority Control and Vocabularies,” looks at linked data and authority control from an STM publishing perspective. Chapter 5, “A Division of Labor,” relates OCLC experimentation with Schema.org to define a model of resource description that can be expressed as linked data. Chapter 6, “BIBFRAME and Linked Data for Libraries,” describes the Library of Congress’s implementation of the Bibliographic Framework Initiative (BIBFRAME) pilot project and the fundamental differences between MARC and BIBFRAME. In some ways I felt that this chapter should have been at the beginning since it contained perhaps the clearest descriptions of RDF, RDF triples, and URIs found in the book.

Prior to reading this book, I was aware of the resource description framework (RDF) but terms such as “RDF triples,” “SPARQL,” “value vocabularies,” “VIAF,” and “BIBFRAME” were quite new to me. I would not recommend this book to a reader who is unfamiliar with these terms. *Linked Data for Cultural Heritage* is geared more toward readers who are accustomed to the terminology and who are interested in reading about the application of linked data in the realm of cultural institutions.

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