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From cataloguing to metadata creation: a cultural and methodological introduction

Mauro Guerrini, the author of this book, is a library and information science scholar from Italy: educated in La Sapienza University of Rome, a professor at the University of Florence. His intellectual origin is important in two respects: there are not many library and information science books authored by Italians published in English and by a British and international publisher; the Italian library and information science tradition is closely associated with archival studies and both disciplines retain strong competence and interest in creation of bibliographic information and cataloguing or resource description in modern terms.

Together with Peter Lor, the author of one of the prefaces, I believe that cataloguing and knowledge organization constitute the core competence of library and information professionals, without regard to whether they are engaged in actual cataloguing and metadata activities or not. The theoretical principles of these activities underpin any other type of our professional work done in libraries or any other institution. The expression of these theoretical principles has been transformed by modern technology and professional practice applying it to widening representation of information media and sources. This development has transformed the seemingly dusty and conservative area to a dynamic discipline essential for the digital world, which may deteriorate into a sheer chaos without scaffolding provided by the principles of information or data organization.

This book is devoted to the transformations in the areas of cataloguing and metadata creation. The text is not extensive, but rich in theoretical content and, although it concentrates on the essentials, is easy to follow. The starting point provides a short account of the first cataloguing and bibliographic works by Callimachus and Panizzi relating those to metadata and interoperability. I liked the reference to *Panta Rei*, the principle of eternal motion by Heraclitus, and *metanoia*, a change of mind, applied to constant re-evaluation of the cataloguing tradition.

The author systematically and logically introduces the evolving and changing concepts and terms related to the transformation of theory and practices. The second chapter in fact lays the foundation of modern work with data and relates it to the continuation of the tradition. The problems and pitfalls encountered in the process are leading to the opening prospects of discovery tools and the application of cataloguing principles to the web.

The bibliographic models and principles are carefully explained in the context of proliferation and expansion of the information resources and their formats by first introducing the models (chapter 3) and then the main aspects of the description process. These parts are in fact the core of the book. Due attention is also given to the bibliographic standards and their development from machine readable records to resource description and access (RDA). Some may find it funny, but reading these chapters I have nostalgically remembered my first international projects when Lithuanian libraries were changing their Soviet standards to the international ones, as well as the puzzles I had to solve while translating ISBDs into the Lithuanian language.

It is a pity that only a very short chapter 8 (two pages actually) introduces the basics of subject cataloguing.

I have mentioned already Peter Lor, a recognized scholar in the area of international and comparative librarianship, as an author or one of the prefaces. The other is Barbara B. Tillet, an expert in modern cataloguing standards. The book also contains an afterword written by Giovanni Bergamin, another well-known Italian expert in the fields of bibliographic information. This intellectual support shows that the book has already attracted attention and approval of prominent experts. I can only add to it by drawing attention of teachers and students of different disciplines related to discovery, access, retrieval, semantic web and information systems to this book. They will benefit from the expertise of its author who is successfully merging national tradition with international developments.

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