

Working with Metadata 2020

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The LSE Library Strategy recognises that 'Library staff have a unique combination of professional knowledge, skills and experience' and inspires us to 'act as leaders in our professional networks in the UK and internationally, ensuring that our involvement contributes to the School's mission.'¹

Having an employer who encourages and supports external involvement in the wider profession can enrich the careers of those who take hold of this, as well as benefitting their institution, and my own working life has been greatly enhanced by the opportunities to get involved in work beyond the walls of the Library.

My first experience of working in a group outside my workplace was with the CIG (now MDG) committee. This gave me an excellent opportunity to work alongside metadata specialists at other institutions, learning from their professional expertise, as well as sharing what I had learned and developing my own skills as I took part in the discussions and work of the committee. Those relationships continue to this day, enhancing my professional life (and extending to friendships beyond it). By the end of 2016 I had been on the committee for seven years, which was the maximum term of service allowed by CILIP without a break. Since joining the committee I had moved roles within the LSE Library, and now had a broader remit managing its Metadata team, but I was still keen to make time for professional involvement to contribute to the sector, and to enrich my day-to-day work.

In early 2018 I became aware of the work of Metadata 2020, 'a collaboration that advocates richer, connected, and reusable, open metadata for all research outputs, which will advance scholarly pursuits for the benefit of society.'² The collaboration involves librarians, funders, researchers, publishers, aggregators and service providers and opened up the opportunity to work alongside a global community of practitioners from across the scholarly communications ecosystem. I volunteered to join two of the six project groups focusing on Researcher Communications and on Shared Best Practice and Principles.³ Initially I took part in online meetings and contributed to some offline work. Then in October 2018 a two day workshop was convened for participants across all six projects. I was eager to attend and become more involved but I had some degree of uncertainty as to whether I would be able to make a valuable contribution once I saw that most of the attendees came from the other professional groupings. These fears were alleviated on the day and I found that my enthusiasm for the topic, and desire to get to know fellow attendees were shared by other participants who, just like the library community, were friendly, communicative and willing to bring me up to speed on any sector specific gaps in my knowledge. Many of the topics and issues that came up in discussion were familiar ones, particularly as I work with research outputs metadata as well as the more traditional forms of library metadata, and I realised that I was able to contribute experiences from my library perspective.

It is not unusual for opportunities for further involvement with community engagement to come with a heightened sense of imposter syndrome, and this was my experience when during an online meeting the week before the workshop I was asked to deliver the project update for the Shared Best Practice and Principles group, and to chair an interactive session. Despite some trepidation this was an excellent opportunity for a new professional challenge as well as the chance for some personal development that would require me to step out of my comfort zone. The project update was less daunting because as a project participant I was familiar with our work, and was able to prepare an update in advance, which one of the project leads, in America, kindly fleshed out for me. Chairing a session, however, felt significantly more challenging. As a project team we had been working, in online meetings and offline work, on a set of metadata best practices and principles. These had been discussed at a workshop in New York, which took place the week before our London workshop, and an online call (in the pre-pandemic days, before this became our normal way of working!) to one of the project leads enabled me to be brought up to date with what had been discussed and agreed, and ascertain what needed to be achieved at the London meeting. Chairing sessions outside my workplace was a new experience for me, using a different skill set from my day-to-day metadata work in order to respond to the unexpected, follow fast discussion and debate, and know when to follow diversions and when to bring the conversation back on track.



It was my responsibility to capture discussions and report back to the leads of the Shared Best Practice and Principles project, but mindful of the fact it could be challenging to facilitate discussion at the same time as taking comprehensive notes, the workshop convenor kindly agreed also to take notes of the session and these were very helpful in refreshing my memory after the event when I came to write up the discussion. Initially we discussed and captured ideas, but as the conversation grew and new ideas formed it was helpful to capture these visually. We therefore used a whiteboard so that everyone could see outputs and we could jump more easily between principles and points of best practice, capturing relationships where required and editing our work as our thinking changed and developed.

Once a completed draft of the best practices and principles had been finalised by the project group I responded to a call to co-write an article about this community-based effort. This gave me the opportunity to work closely with the project convenor and four core team members in the United States to share the methodology used to create the principles, connect them to existing work, outline their use and suggest how they might serve as a foundation for future activity. This is the second time in my career that I have co-authored an article with external colleagues and it is an enriching experience to observe, learn from and work alongside experts in closely related professions.

At the beginning of the year 2021, Metadata 2020 relaunched their website with the purpose of supporting ongoing community activity⁴ and ownership. This encouraged direct action, with 'things you can do to promote and support richer, open metadata'⁵ and promoted learning through sharing the outputs created by the Metadata 2020 community⁶.

Overall, it has been an enriching and enjoyable experience to work with a broad and diverse community so relevant to my library metadata focus and I am delighted to have been part of an initiative promoting the value and necessity of metadata in connecting research for the benefit of society. We should never underestimate the value of our metadata skills or their contribution to the world around us. 'From a societal context, open metadata is a critical component of addressing some of the world's greatest challenges.'⁷ I would encourage our metadata community to 'think big', grow confident in our abilities to contribute to and enrich society through our metadata, and to be involved wherever we can be.

References

¹LSE Library (2016), *LSE Library Strategy*, <https://www.lse.ac.uk/library/about/lse-library-strategy> (Accessed 27/4/2021)

²Metadata 2020 (2020), *About Metadata 2020*, <http://www.metadata2020.org/about/> (Accessed 27/4/2021)

³Metadata 2020 (2021), *Phase 2: Projects*, <https://metadata2020.org/learn-more/projects/> (Accessed 27/4/2021)

⁴Kaiser, Kathryn, Kemp, Jennifer, Paglione, Laura, Ratner, Howard, Schott, David and Williams, Helen K. R. (2020). *Methods & proposal for metadata guiding principles for scholarly communications*. Research Ideas and Outcomes, 6. ISSN 2367-7163, <https://riojournal.com/article/53916/> (Accessed 27/4/2021)

⁵Metadata 2020 (2021), *Do More*, <https://metadata2020.org/do-more/> (Accessed 27/4/2021)

⁶Metadata 2020 (2021), *Phase 3: Outcomes*, <https://metadata2020.org/learn-more/outcomes/> (Accessed 27/4/2021)

⁷Metadata 2020 (2021), *Spread the word about metadata* <https://metadata2020.org/do-more/spread-the-word/> (Accessed 27/4/2021)