User Perspectives of Works

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Humanizing Information Retrieval: Organizing "Works"

Overview

- Purpose of inquiry into works
- An historical perspective
- User research
- Research possibilities

Why do we care about works?

- Because we ***do*** want to humanize the information retrieval process

- Works can be large and unruly, creating significant retrieval problems for users

- Information systems frequently provide inadequate access to works because of

  - inconsistencies among the documents representing them and

  - difficulties in creating representions these documents in a coherent way

THE HAUNTED POOL

(LA MARE AU DIABLE)

———

From the French of George Sand

BY

FRANK HUNTER POTTER

Illustrated with Fourteen Etchings by RUDAUX

THE DEVIL'S POOL

BY

GEORGE SAND

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH BY

JANE MINOT SEDGWICK

AND

ELLERY SEDGWICK

WITH AN ETCHING BY E. ABOT

NEW-YORK

GEORGE H. RICHMOND & CO.

1894

GEORGE SAND

La Mare au Diable

PRÉFACE
de LOUIS CORNIQUET
Docteur en Droit

LONDON
J. M. DENT & Co.
NEW YORK
G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS
1905

Humanizing information retrieval

- Our goals may include:
  - building systems and processes that facilitate user identification and selection of items belonging to a work
  - building systems and processes that make it easy for users to determine what they have retrieved, and what is available

Difficulty in ascertaining "user perceptions" of works

- notion of work is abstract
- abstract notions are difficult to verbalize or demonstrate
- difficult to obtain evidence that is not affected by research design
- What kind of research will actually demonstrate what user perceptions of works are?

History Suggests...

- a long standing recognition of the notion of "work" from the user perspective via the composition of catalog arrangements – what users see displayed when they use the catalog

Works revealed to users in catalog arrangements

- Catalog arrangements from as early as the 17th century indicate a recognition that works are important to users because they have been provided for via record arrangements (Frost, Smiraglia 2001)

- Bibliographic records for editions (manifestations) of works were thoughtfully and purposely arranged together in (frequently) content-based arrangements (Carlyle, 1997)

2nd Objective & the 20th Century

- In the mid-20th century voices like Lubetzky's urged the adoption of an expanded view of the second cataloging objective to include works

- Focus of these voices was on the user of the catalog

FRBR and the 21ˢᵗ Century

- Functional Requirements of Bibliographic Records (FRBR) – a document model
- FRBR incorporates the notion of work as an abstract entity, as well as a new abstract entity "expression", again connected to users and the need to rationalize cataloging practice.

Evidence of User Perceptions of Works

- Mostly anecdotal
- Some carefully drawn theoretical views (e.g., Lubetzky)
- Very little (no?) research-based evidence

User Research

- Carlyle study to determine how people organized a wide variety of documents related to Dickens *A Christmas Carol*

- Attributes used to organize documents included language, physical format, audience, content age/integrity ("unabridged"), pictorial elements, and usage

But what do we really know about users & works?

- Carlyle research only suggests one type of user perception; limited by user interaction with a single work and by the nature of the study (e.g., did not ask: what belongs with the work and what doesn't?)

New research to get at user perceptions of works

- New research project: survey of library users looking for a particular book
- Focus on FRBR entities – when a user is looking for a book, what entity is actually sought and what might be substitutable

New user research

- Question users as to what they would take home if their item was not available

- E.g., would they take an abridged version (expression)? a large print version (manifestation)? a cd-rom or movie version (related work)?

- Relate to purpose for checking out book – is purpose related to user perception of work? to to the object of their search?

Future research

- Domain analysis and works: to what extent is perception of works influenced by domain or by task/purpose?

- How do we best obtain evidence of user perceptions of works in order to create better information systems?

Future directions

- Increased user research

- In the library catalog world, increased attention to cataloger training and understanding, and improved record structures

- System design solutions with experimentation and usability testing