Book Reviews

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Cataloging Cultural Objects: A Guide to Describing Cultural Works and Their Images. By Murtha Baca, Patricia Harpring, Elisa Lanzi, Linda McRae, Ann Whiteside, on behalf of the Visual Resources Association. Chicago: ALA, 2006. $85.00 (ALA members $76.50) paper (ISBN 978-0-8389-3564-4/0-8389-3564-8)

Cataloging Cultural Objects (CCO) is a data content standard for use in creating records that describe works of art, cultural heritage objects, and their images. Describing these objects makes many demands upon the cataloger, since the materials can range from prehistoric carvings to paintings, photographs, textiles, or to every arch, dome, facade, and window of a building in addition to the entire building as a whole. Images documenting these objects often accompany the descriptive records for the objects, and these images must also be described, as the creator, creation date, view, and so on, are also valuable information. Unlike published texts (whose context is largely self-evident), art objects, cultural heritage objects, and their images must be contextualized by the cataloger so that intellectual access is possible. This is accomplished by creating detailed descriptions of these objects in addition to creating links between work records, image records, and authority records.

There are several standards for use in cataloging art, architecture, and cultural objects, but the greatest effort has been focused on data values (controlled vocabularies such as the *Art & Architecture Thesaurus*) or on data structures (metadata elements meant for expression within a database, such as *Categories for the Description of Works of Art*). Well-established descriptive cataloging standards such as the Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules do have rules for describing "art originals," but they are treated in an abbreviated manner more suitable for the description of published items; they lack the flexibility and detail necessary to describe unique cultural objects adequately. The lack of a comprehensive cataloging standard for these materials has resulted in a lack of consistency, which in turn has hampered the retrieval and sharing of information. *Cataloging Cultural Objects: A Guide* was written to fill this need for a comprehensive standard to "guide the choice of terms and define the order, syntax, and form in which data values should be entered into a data structure" (xii).

Cataloging Cultural Objects: A Guide is divided into three parts. The first part, "General Guidelines," discusses general principles and guidelines for making cataloging decisions. The second part presents the CCO elements. The third part treats authority records. The book is intended to be a reference for use while cataloging. To aid the user, the layout of each part is the same, and pertinent information is repeated from chapter to chapter. Other helpful visual cues include numbered sections and recommendations in bold type. Elements that are required, controlled, and linked to an authority or another work record are clearly marked in the examples of full records. There is an index, a bibliography, and a glossary, although the language is so clear and jargon-free that a glossary almost seems redundant. Unfamiliar terms and concepts regarding data are defined and discussed in the text, and standard resources for art terminology are referred to throughout the text.

Although *Cataloging Cultural Objects: A Guide* is meant to be used as a cataloging tool and not read cover to cover, part 1, "General Guidelines," should be read in its entirety, since it provides a framework for using the rest of the book. Since the aims of cataloging art objects and images vary from institution to institution and collection to collection, CCO is not as prescriptive as other data content standards, and part 1 discusses the many decisions that the cataloging agency must make before beginning to catalog. Recommendations for analyzing a work, establishing a logical focus for a record, and for making local cataloging decisions are particularly valuable. Indeed, part 1 should be read by every cataloger because it reaffirms the principles of good cataloging, such as consistency, using established standards, documenting local rules, and considering the needs of the user and the institution when making cataloging decisions.

Part 1 also contains a section on database design and relationships, which discusses best practices for creating data that is interoperable, sustainable, and can be repurposed. CCO was written for the online environment, and while one of the key principles of CCO is that "cataloging, classification, indexing, and display are different but related functions" (2), it also considers the impact these issues have on the creation of data. Chapter 1 also discusses the different purposes to which descriptive data can be put: not only for finding aids but also in didactic tools, collection management systems, and digital asset management systems. This information will be useful for every cataloger wanting to know the principles of good catalog and database design.

Part 2, "Elements," is divided into

nine chapters and lists and describes the areas of a work record. Each area, or element, gets its own chapter. Many of them, such as View Description (chapter 9) or Style (chapter 4), will be unfamiliar to the book cataloger; others, such as Title (chapter 1), will be familiar but have nuances and applications that are unique to art and visual resources cataloging. Each chapter begins with a description of the element in the context of art cataloging and discusses syntax, terminology, sources of information, and repeatable, required, and recommended elements. The rules for each element follow the introduction and are illustrated by copious examples. For areas such as Physical Characteristics (chapter 3), where the data can vary widely depending upon the object being described, specific recommendations are given for a wide variety of object types: paintings, drawings, prints, sculpture, furniture, glass, architecture, textiles, performance art, etc. Each chapter concludes with a full display of the entire work record, the linked authorities, and often an image of the work being described. Part 3, "Authorities," has the same format as part 2 but discusses the creation and function of authority records.

Cultural Cataloging of Objects: A Guide does not discuss technical or administrative metadata, but since these metadata are outside the scope of the standard this omission is not a flaw. Nor is it a flaw that CCO does not recommend a specific platform or database standard, since CCO was written to be used in a "variety of database settings and designs" (20). The first paragraph of part 1 discusses the mapping of CCO elements to metadata element sets such as VRA Core or the Categories for the Description of Works of Art (CDWA), which are in turn mapped to MARC and Dublin Core. The cataloging agency considering CCO might want to make use of published crosswalks, such as *Metadata Standards Crosswalks.*[1]

Cataloging Cultural Objects: A Guide gives the cataloger tools to describe art, images, and cultural objects consistently. By writing a descriptive cataloging standard that also addresses indexing, linking records, and display—in short, the use and re-use of descriptive metadata—the authors have also laid the foundation for a new, sustainable catalog. Beyond its very real value to the art and visual resources cataloger, CCO can be used as a model for evolving cataloging codes.—*Sarah E. Quimby, (squimby@artsmia.org), Minneapolis Institute of Arts, Minneapolis, Minn.*

References

1. Getty Research Institute, "Metadata Standards Crosswalks," Compiled by Patricia Harpring, Mary S. Woodley, Anne J. Gilliland, and Murtha Baca. J. Paul Getty Trust, www.getty.edu/research/conducting_research/standards/intrometadata/crosswalks.html (accessed Jan. 28, 2008).

Metadata and Its Applications in the Digital Library: Approaches and Practices. By Jia Liu. Westport, Conn.: Libraries Unlimited, 2007. $40.00 paper (ISBN 978-1-59158-306-6).

Using the Open Archives Initiative Protocol for Metadata Harvesting. By Timothy W. Cole, Muriel Foulonneau. Westport, Conn.: Libraries Unlimited, 2007. $45.00 paper (ISBN 978-1-59158-280-9/1-59 158-280-6).

With every book on metadata I encounter, I scrutinize it as if I were a neophyte in the field, for I firmly believe in the instructive responsibility of the writers to enlighten the reader in a deliberate, thorough, and engaging manner. I thus approached these two works with this perspective in mind.

First, numerous texts describing metadata in varying degrees of depth and breadth have seen publication over the past decade. Joining this

assembly in 2007, *Metadata and Its Applications in the Digital Library* by Jia Liu provides yet another survey of metadata and its implementation in the electronic environments of libraries and archives.

Liu divides her work into two parts, delving first into the definitions, typologies, encoding, and related electronic aspects of metadata. The author's opening gambit "[s]imply put, metadata is data about data" (3) and her exegeses on other aspects of the topic presupposes a readership already experienced in the metadata field, whether in theory or in practice. As a result, newcomers may find themselves handicapped as they make their way through the text, although the exploration of some parts may still bear fruit. For example, chapter 4, "Metadata Implementation," examines the digital context of metadata with short and effective descriptions of terminology and practices common to the discipline: application profiles, namespaces, schemas, and crosswalks.

Another highlight in this chapter is Liu's fascinating but brief venture into the production workflow of metadata content, the case in point being descriptions of automated and manual processes for generating metadata such as the popular Web browser-friendly Dublin Core Metadata Template offered by the Nordic Metadata Project. I was gratified to encounter this important addition to the narrative that lies between the abstractions and particulars of metadata structure and the consequent public face of a digital library project. Metadata content production can easily get lost in the wealth of information concerning encoding, schemas, and application.

In part 2, "Metadata Projects and Their Applications in the Digital Library," Liu devotes thirty pages to international and institutional efforts to employ metadata for particular operations and communities. She reveals in the book's preface the international scope of her examination of