Book Reviews

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Linked Data for the Perplexed Librarian. By Scott Carlson, Cory Lampert, Darnelle Melvin, and Anne Washington. Chicago: ALA Editions, 2020. 164p. $59.99 softcover (ISBN 978-0-8389-4746-3)

In the introduction, the authors of this concise work state that their aim is to present the basics of linked data specifically to librarians "whose background may not be traditionally considered 'technical'" (x). They state that the book "is a great primer on linked data basics, it is not an exhaustive dive into the topic, nor is it intended to make you an expert" (xi). To a large degree, the authors meet these objectives, at least to this reviewer who is not of a technical background.

The authors realize that members of the linked data community often have difficulty communicating with less technical library staff. They also acknowledge that while linked data is widely discussed at conferences and in the library literature, it is applied in real life only at larger institutions with larger budgets, staff, and institutional support. Meanwhile, other librarians wonder what relevance linked data has to their work.

First, the authors define linked data, which is data that can be read by both humans and machines. The authors begin with a history of linked data, which is also really a history of the internet, and more specifically the World Wide Web. They next discuss the "Semantic Web," which utilizes linked data. In one of many useful examples in the book, they explain the "Semantic Web" by depicting things your brain is likely to know about Charlie Chaplin, such as that he was a person with a movie career, even if you are not an expert in the history of show business. The authors then illustrate how linked data, in the form of the "Semantic Web," can make connections such as between Charlie Chaplin and the studio that produced his movies. That studio also produced movies by his friends Douglas Fairbanks and Mary Pickford, and later produced James Bond movies. This reviewer found examples such as this, and the accompanying graphics, to be quite helpful in illustrating how the data connections are made.

The book proceeds on to a history of Machine-Readable Cataloging (MARC). Not surprisingly, a format designed for a printed environment does not work for linked data, as it cannot create connections among various forms of data. It is also unknown outside of the library world. In the "About the authors" section, all four authors name their favorite P-Funk album(s). This reviewer (who read that part first) initially thought this was an interesting quirk, but it turned out to be a very important factor in their presentation of linked data.

They used the example of a library receiving a donation of an extensive collection of funk and soul vinyl records. In another useful example, the authors describe the difficulties in using MARC to convey that an album may have both an LP and a CD version. It also cannot convey that an album is a collection of songs, because the MARC 505 (contents note) and 740 (Added Entry-Uncontrolled Related/Analytical Title) fields have weaknesses. The authors describe Resource Description Framework (RDF) as a linked data means of showing connections among various data points. For example, George Clinton is both a performer and a producer of musical albums.

As the book proceeds, it becomes more technical, as the authors warned in the introduction. They proceed to describe Universal Resource Identifiers (URIs) as a way to identify data in a format readable to both computers and humans. Next, they describe various linked data formats, including SPARQL, RDF/XML, N-Triples, Turtle, and JSON-LD. The descriptions include sample data presented in the various formats. The next chapter is devoted to ontologies and linked data.

Real world examples are also presented, explaining how a Google search might determine whether someone is searching for "Black Panther" the movie or "black panther" the animal. The authors also describe social media and Wikidata. The next few chapters attempt to answer the questions many librarians have: When and how are they going to use linked data? It already is used in libraries: Library of Congress name authority headings. They then proceed to the inevitable discussion of the Bibliographic Framework Initiative (BIBFRAME), the data model that is intended to eventually replace MARC. However, BIBFRAME, like linked data, is often discussed but seldom used in the general library world.

The authors wrap up their slim volume with some sample library projects that use linked data, such as doing inventories of data, exploring tools and technologies, remediating and enhancing metadata, using graphs and RDF, using linked data in communities, experimenting with real world data, assessing linked data, and finally, and perhaps most importantly, making the case for using linked data. While it was good to see these projects and it would be interesting to explore them further, it still seems unlikely

that many linked data projects will be initiated in any but the largest institutions, especially as all kinds of libraries must reinvent their everyday services and activities in light of the 2020 coronavirus pandemic. In the concluding chapter, the authors acknowledge that libraries are not currently using linked data, which means that an obsolete format continues to be used in part due to technical and staffing issues.

The authors succeed in increasing the reader's understanding of linked data and the benefits of implementing it.

This volume was an engaging introduction to the topic of linked data. The good use of examples conveyed understanding of a technical topic to this non-technical reviewer. —*Judy Gitlin, (judith.gitln@dc.edu), Dominican College*

The Role of the Electronic Resources Librarian. Ed. George Stachokas. Cambridge, MA: Chandos Publishing, 2019. 176 p. $67.99 softcover (ISBN: 978-0-08-102925-1)

The eight chapters covered in this text give a detailed history about how the role of electronic resource (e-resource) librarians (ERLs) has evolved over the past several decades as libraries have shifted to an online environment. It covers the challenges faced from 1992 when the ERL title was first used, to 2019 where academic libraries are still a hybrid of print and electronic materials. The book is organized into eight chapters with three appendixes. The introduction gives a brief overview on the development of ERLs and a clear synopsis of chapters, which are a nice progression of how the ERL position has developed since the 1990s; how it has been represented in organizational structures across academic libraries; how it has handled a variety of obstacles (technology, expanding skill sets, budget constraints, etc.); and how it maps to current trends in managing e-resources.

The history of the ERL is covered in more detail than the current state and future of the ERL, and the details of the evolution of the ERL is a strength of this text. There is significant discussion on how technology, including the development of the World Wide Web, had a huge impact on the development of the ERL from CD-ROMs to online journals, e-books, and library websites. In several chapters the book addresses the many changes in technology, tools, standards, and requirements used to manage the information that has forced libraries to change. Chapter 5 discusses the Electronic Resource Management Initiative (ERMI), which saw the need for a system to manage all of the important information that needs to be tracked for e-resource management (ERM) systems. ERM systems were developed based on the Digital Library Federation (DLF) ERMI requirements. Other emerging technologies had a big impact on ERLs, including web scale discovery, knowledge bases, and COUNTER statistics. Historically, libraries have struggled to rethink their work with new technology and have been resistant to change. Many libraries are still facing the same issues and limitations, but it is critical to adapt to remain relevant.

Of particular interest is the impact of the evolving role of ERLs on organizational structures. New technology, along with the shift to an online environment, led to changes in how users looked for information, the development of new skill sets, and this forced libraries to rethink their structures. The book highlights several studies related to the evolution of ERL positions and how the role of the position has changed over time. Impacts such as economic downturns and the growth of e-resources have forced libraries to rethink positions, workflows, and services. These changes have resulted in different approaches to assigning ERL responsibilities. Early on, most of the work was assigned to one position, but as discussed in Chapter 8, most ERM work currently is a group effort, and many libraries still struggle with adequate staffing for managing e-resources.

A recent driver in reorganizations has been the Core Competencies developed by the NASIG Core Competencies Task Force (NCCTF) and its members in 2013. Appendix A, "Core Competencies for Electronic Resources Librarians," includes a detailed explanation of the seven competencies. It clearly expresses the overall complexity of the challenge libraries are facing to transition to mostly electronic collections and the skill sets needed to manage them. With the lack of ERM courses in LIS programs, Chapter 8 discusses how ERLs have become more dependent on professional organizations for education in addition to on-the-job training.

The Role of the Electronic Resources Librarian provides valuable insight into the many challenges ERLs have faced and continue to face, and the importance of addressing and adapting to the ongoing changes in the digital world. Library administrators and technical services departments will relate to this book as many continue to struggle with managing traditional library services alongside the growth of electronic resources. Many questions still remain on how best to manage e-resources, but it is clear that it is vital to the survival and value of libraries. As the author says, "Librarians need to commit to providing the best possible information services in the digital world" (101). This book leaves one with a lot to think about and ponder in terms of the role of the ERL going forward.—*Jennifer Murray, (jennifer.murray@unf.edu), University of North Florida*