New models from old tools
Leveraging an understanding of information tasks and subject domain to support enhanced discovery and access to folktales

Abstract
This paper provides an introduction to an ongoing research project that aims to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency with which users discover and access folk tales. Through systematic and rigorous research combining task analysis with facet analysis, the researchers intend to develop an enhanced bibliographic record prototype. The focus of the paper, however, is to discuss results from the preliminary phase of this project. In particular it will describe the information tasks, information seeking obstacles, and desired features for a discovery and access tool related to folktales for a group of scholarly users of folktales. Additionally the paper will address some of the bibliographic, cultural, and intellectual facets derived from a sample of folktale resources. Finally it proposes a provisional model for enhanced bibliographic records, comparing it with the one implicit in extant bibliographic discovery and access tools.

1: Aim and scope of the study
Folktales connect communities and people across time and space. Each culture has stories that have endured and evolved through spoken narrative and printed word. Each tale’s iterations carry culturally unique values and ideals while pointing to shared human experience. Despite the persistence and efforts of informants, adapters, compilers, storytellers, librarians, and scholars to keep these stories alive through collecting, telling, and publishing, many of these stories are veiled from potential audiences because of limitations in current structures for representation and discovery in the bibliographic catalogs of libraries and similar institutions.

Contemporary tools for discovery and access, such as library catalogs, are finding new ways to leverage the structure of bibliographic records. New strategies are needed in order to overcome the limitations of old access systems that often unnecessarily prevented efficiency in information seeking tasks involving complex information resources. Consider, for instance, a person who was seeking folktales from Egypt. Although a keyword or subject search in an OPAC might result in possible relevant resources, it might also omit some such as Jane Yolen’s Favorite folktales from around the world. This collection includes tales from Egypt, as well as from countries such as Mexico, China, and Ireland, yet this might not be apparent to someone examining the bibliographic record. The subject field for this item, in many libraries, is a single term – Tales. Viewing an expanded record for this title may result in access to an abbreviated table of contents, but no records can be found that include information such as titles or counties of origins for each of the 160 tales in this collection. In short, all of the available bibliographic records for this book – and many similar folktale resources – acknowledge little of the rich cultural heritage a reader might find in it.

Unlike the users of many other specialized resource types, the people who search for folktales and the information tasks that draw them to these resources are as varied as the tales themselves. For instance, folklorists and other scholarly users may want to undertake a comparative study of a particular tale type, while librarians designing a children’s program may want to find multiple versions of a single tale in order to
identify the most appropriate one for their needs (Goldberg 2003). Even children might want to explore different retellings of a favorite story such as Cinderella. Yet, each of these users must often rely on the brief descriptions in bibliographic records as they attempt to complete their information tasks.

Specialized tools such as *A guide to folktales in the English language: based on the Aarne-Thompson classification system* (Ashliman 1987) and *The storyteller’s sourcebook: a subject, title, and motif index to folklore collections for children, 1983-1999* (MacDonald & Sturm 2001) do exist and can aid users in discovering and accessing folktales. Unfortunately, these resources are incomplete in their coverage, build frequently from technical terms and constructs that may be unsuitable for all users because they add a layer of complex intermediation to any information task. Some work has been done by disparate individuals and groups to offer augmented computer-based discovery and access for folktales through portals such as the proprietary site *Tales online* (Brottman 2004) and the *Nederlandse Volksverhalenbank*, a project by the Meertens Institut. To date, these online tools suffer some of the same limitations as the print tools.

Our research project aims to enhance the effectiveness and efficient discovery of and access to folktales. We believe that through systematic and rigorous research that combines task analysis with facet analysis, it is possible to wed deep understanding of folklorists’, storytellers’, and others’ information tasks with new access models of the intellectual content of folktales and related resources. In undertaking this study, we are heeding Kuhlthau’s (2005) call for greater connection between the study of users' information-seeking behaviors and the design of information retrieval systems through the construction of collaborative frameworks that encourage and strengthen the study of task-focused information seeking and user-centered system design. This study also draws on recommendations for more integrated and theoretically repositioned models (e.g. Hjørland 1997; Ingwersen & Jarvelin 2005) for studying both information seeking and use and information retrieval that complement those offered by Kuhlthau.

2: Method and findings
The method reported in this section pertains to preliminary work conducted for what we anticipate being a three-year research project involving collaborators and participants from diverse fields and institutions. Consequently, the scope of this preliminary work is limited in two important ways. First, the researchers interviewed a small number of subjects, each of whom is engaged in scholarly activity related to folktales but none of whom would be identified primarily as folklorists. Second, the folktale collection that forms the basis for the facet analysis is comprised largely of folktales that have been adapted for a juvenile audience; some folklorists (e.g. Goldberg 2003) would consider a collection such as this one inadequate to support legitimate folklore scholarship.

2.1: Understanding information seeking
With the approval of our University’s Institutional Review Board, we conducted semi-structured interviews with four of the five faculty members in the department where we work, the Graduate School of Library and Information Science. Each of the subjects is engaged in scholarly activity related to folklore, including editing collections of
folktales, reviewing folktales adapted for children, studying audience engagement in storytelling performance, and documenting the history of literary transmission of folktales. Each of the subjects also teaches in the area of youth services librarianship, an area with a strong tradition of oral storytelling (cf. Hearne 1998), so folklore permeates discussion and work with students. Finally each of the subjects has performed folktales orally as part of professional work experiences.

The purpose for these interviews was to ascertain (1) the types of folktale-related information tasks in which these scholars engaged; (2) the obstacles they have encountered in information seeking; and (3) their suggestions for an ideal tool that would help them in their information-related activities. Although we asked direct questions to elicit relevant insights, we also asked each subject to talk more broadly about other areas including their experiences working with folktales and their educational experiences related to folktales in order to capture information relevant to our interests that may not have been revealed through direct questioning. The interviews – each about one hour in length – were audio-recorded and transcribed for coding. We developed the coding framework on an emergent and iterative basis.

Six categories of information tasks are present in the interview data:

• Exploring (e.g. Reading tale collections for possible future uses; monitoring websites or journals to stay current on scholarly issues pertaining to folktales)
• Creating (e.g. Adapting a folktale for performance; designing a library program based on a folktale)
• Synthesizing (e.g. Reviewing a published adaptation of a folktale for a juvenile audience; documenting the published variants of a particular tale; preparing lecture notes and other instructional materials)
• Studying (e.g. Conducting research on audiences’ responses to oral performance; examining the relationship between women’s personal narratives and folktales)
• Collecting (e.g. Building a personal folktale library to support scholarship; keeping notes about folktale variants to support scholarship)
• Searching (e.g. Using a bibliographic tool to identify a variant; following cited references to identify relevant information)

Some of the tasks overlap with Palmer et al.’s (2009) synthetic model of scholarly information practices. For instance, she and her co-authors identified “collecting” as a core scholarly activity. Searching appears in their model as well as ours, but we have a related category – “exploring” – as well that represents non-directed searching activities that we identified; in contrast, Palmer et al. subsume a similar activity – “browsing” – beneath “searching”. The activity Palmer et al. termed “writing” is similar to “synthesizing” that emerged from our data. Both “studying” and “creating” are unique to our framework with the latter category representing an activity similar to “synthesizing” but with a greater emphasis on creative transformation.

Regarding obstacles to information seeking, the interview data clustered in two categories: disciplinary-related and discovery and access-specific. Examples from the latter category are not especially unique in that they relate to lack of awareness of useful bibliographic tools or problems with the tools themselves (e.g. go out of date quickly). More interesting are the disciplinary-related obstacles, several of which touch on the transitive nature of folktales. For instance, the names given to tales may vary from one collection or one community to another; similarly, tale variants may share motifs,
although the variants have quite different effects or themes. Another intriguing set of
disciplinary-related obstacles pertaining to “translating,” or working across boundaries
(cf. Palmer et al. 2009). The subjects identified translation problems as they sought and
accessed information from a variety of scholarly (e.g. literary criticism, psychoanalysis, anthro-
pology) and disciplinary perspectives (e.g. structuralist, historical-geographic). Translation
problems also occurred as subjects moved from understandings of tales informed by personal experiences (e.g. recalling stories told by family members, reading tales in childhood) to understandings constructed through scholarly practice.

The features these subjects identified as essential for an ideal discovery and access
tool for folktale scholarship reflected both their work as scholars and their professional
experiences in storytelling and youth services librarianship. For instance, the scholarly
focus is evident in requests for searchable fields for source notes and cultural attributions, as well as descriptor fields for motifs such as characters. The professional
focus is clearly visible in proposing the inclusion of programming ideas, ties to learning
standards, and suggested audience ages for performance. All subjects indicated
preferences for a tool that would permit both directed searching and serendipitous
discovery and that offered extended synopses or the full text of tales for searching.

At present, we have yet to observe our subjects engaging with the collection or
existing bibliographic tools. As we are able to schedule observations sessions, though,
we hope to enrich our understanding of the information tasks and demands on resources
these subjects have. Observation data will aid in the refinement of the framework for
describing information tasks as well as highlight obstacles or needs unarticulated in the
interviews.

2.2: Understanding the subject domain
The facet-analytic dimension of this study builds on a traditional understanding of
facets, as articulated by Ranganathan, who viewed them as basic concepts that are
inherent in a given subject. Facets are uncovered through a technique, known as facet
analysis, which requires the conceptual analysis of a subject area into a set of
fundamental categories. The entire process of facet analysis is governed by a canon
composed of principles (specific rules), postulates (guidelines) and devices and forms
the basis of faceted classification, which cannot be said to exist without it (Vickery

A stratified (i.e. by decade of publication) random sample of 100 folktale books from
the collection of the Center for Children’s Books (CCB) at the University of Illinois at
Urbana-Champaign formed the core collection of materials subjected to facet analysis
for the preliminary phase of this project. One of the world’s premier reviewing and
examination centers for children’s books and related materials, the CCB includes more
than 15,000 English-language print and non-print resources in its non-circulating
collection. Folktales published in single-tale volumes and multiple-tale collections, and
scholarly resources related to folklore and storytelling comprise approximately ten
percent (or 1500 items) of the CCB’s collection. Publication dates for the print materials
span the 20th and 21st centuries, but a majority of the items were published after 1960.
We examined the records and reviews for items in the sample, as well as books
themselves, for the facet-analysis portion of our protocol.
As reported in La Barre’s (2010) paper, also published in this volume, a variety of facets emerged through our analysis of these resources. For instance, these resources were careful to articulate authorial responsibility to distinguish among authors, editors, adapters, translators, illustrators, and retellers. Another important facet pertained to the type of story, acknowledging differences among folktales, fairy tales, fables, legends, and myths. Cultural attribution – whether geographic region or a particular ethnic or cultural group – as well as the documentation of sources through notes or bibliographies were important facets especially among works published in recent decades. Motifs emerged as another important facet. Within folkloric analyses of folktales, motifs refer to small persistent elements of individual stories and are most frequently classified as actors (e.g. an ogre, Anansi), items (e.g. a magical broom, an incantation), and plot elements (e.g. a contest, burial alive) (cf. Thompson 1946).

In addition to examining the sample of books from the CCB, we also examined selected bibliographic tools to aid in the discovery of and access to folktales (e.g. Ashliman 1987; MacDonald & Sturm 2003; American Folklore Society n.d.) along with some core scholarly and overview works related to folktales (e.g. Dorson 1972; Thompson 1946; Toelken 1996). Suggestions for the works we examined came both from our interview subjects and from bibliographies such as the one provided by the Folk Narrative Section of the American Folklore Society. Our analysis of these materials provided further support for the validity of the facets derived from the book sample. Another outcome was heightened awareness of the methodological approaches in studying folktales that our subjects described in the interviews as presenting translation problems.

As with our investigation and analysis of users’ information tasks and related requirements, our analysis of facets is still ongoing at this preliminary phase. For instance, we have yet to engage in a rigorous facet analysis of users’ information tasks.

3: Provisional model for a prototype record for folktales

Based on the assessment of scholarly users’ information seeking requirements together with a preliminary facet analysis of the collection sample and subject domain, we have developed a model for an enhanced bibliographic record for folktales. Many parts of our model, but certainly not all, are currently supported in existing record models, but they are not being leveraged widely in next generation catalogs (cf. La Barre 2010). The model is not intended to be comprehensive or reflect all elements pertinent to bibliographic control; instead it must be viewed as a proposal emanating from our data and subsequent analysis. It also reflects attention to only single-tale publications, although we intend to work toward a more complex model for collected works that makes use of RDA and FRBR.

In addition to simply outlining our provisional model below, we have endeavored to indicate points where our model meshes with existing record structures. For instance, where they exist, MARC variable data fields corresponding to aspects of our model are noted. For novel aspects of our model, we likewise have endeavored to indicate sources for the data; as you will note, many of these sources can be harvested from the materials themselves.
1 Location
11 LC Number (MARC 050)
12 DDC Number (MARC 082)

2 Title
21 Title statement (MARC 245)
22 Varying forms of title (MARC 246)

3 Responsibility
31 Adaptor (MARC 245; MARC 700)
32 Illustrator (MARC 245; MARC 700)
33 Collector (MARC 245; MARC 700)
34 Narrator (MARC 245; MARC 511; MARC 700)
35 Translator (MARC 245; MARC 700)
36 Publisher (MARC 260)

4 Place
41 Publication (MARC 260)
42 Origin (MARC 751)
43 Collection (MARC 751)

5 Date
51 Publication (MARC 260)
52 Collection

6 Description
61 Bibliographic (MARC 300)
62 LCCN (MARC 010)
63 ISBN (MARC 020)
64 Type/Format (MARC 655)

7 Subject
71 Topical (MARC 650)
72 Motif (MARC 654 – Source: Uther (2004) and similar indexes, text)
721 ActorType
722 ActorName
723 Items
724 Actions
73 Tale-type (MARC 654 – Source: Uther (2004) and similar indexes, text)
74 Theme (MARC 654 – Source: Book reviews, publisher’s information)

8 Comment
81 Review (MARC 510)
82 Audience (MARC 521 – S.: Book rev., users)
83 Program (MARC 653 – Source: Users; MARC 658)
84 Illustration (Source: Text, book reviews)

9 Context
91 Summary (MARC 520)
92 Table of contents (MARC 505)
93 Cultural (MARC 545)
94 Related works (MARC 504; MARC 510; MARC 581)
95 Awards (MARC 586)
96 Collection (MARC 567)
References
La Barre K., 2010, Facets, search, and discovery in next generation catalogs: informing the future by revisiting past under standing, in *this volume*.

*Web documents have been accessed 20 September 2009.*