
This book emerged from a semester-long faculty research study seminar at the University of California Humanities Research Institute and from a parallel, co-taught student seminar in the Science Studies Program at the University of California, San Diego. It is a graceful collage of essays, newspaper and magazine clippings, and other odds and ends all dealing with the question: “How have people dealt, in ordinary ways, with these millions of interlocking standards?” (p.4).

We are surrounded by standards, from coffin sizes to food-portion supersizing, from red/green traffic lights to “flesh-colored” Band-aids, from ethnic profiles to emission standards—sometimes they work so well they become invisible, and sometimes they provide stumbling blocks. Many standards fit their purpose well, but many violate our rights and our dignity. They enable the smooth running of our technologies, but they frustrate, cause misery, and wreak havoc as well. In their introductory essay “Reckoning with Standards,” the editors consider the use, creation, disuse and abuse of standards and identify analytic commonalities. These are (pp. 4-5):

- Standards are nested inside one another;
- They are distributed unevenly across the sociocultural landscape; and,
- Are relative to communities of practice; that is one person’s well-fitting standards may be another’s impossible nightmare;
- They are increasingly linked to and integrated with one another across many organizations, nations, and technical systems; and,
- They codify, embody, or prescribe ethics and values, often with great consequences for individuals.

The book is an orchestrated exploration, discussion, provocative probing and illustration of these observations. Ah, standards—you would think the eyes might glaze over, but this is not a traditional linear exposition, and so you are enveloped in the topic as in a well-told tale. It is a recursive and interlocking arrangement among the contributing authors and the auxiliary texts that are used to illuminate the main themes. Put another way, each episode is an exercise in cumulating consciousness-raising.

In “Beyond the Standard Human” Steven Epstein explores “attempts by what might be called an antistandardization resistance movement to displace the standard human.” We welcome standards that make life easier; we learn to get around standards that seem inevitable, but the notion of a “standard human” is distasteful to many of us. Even so, there are many instances in which this construct is invoked, and we barely notice. Epstein narrates the rise of statistics in the 1800s and the ability to measure and map the typical human characteristics—the notion of *L’homme Moyen* (pp. 38-9). He goes on to describe, among other instances, the use of the "new standardized object for biomedical research—the human subject (p.41)," and the implications of doing so for those literally not measuring up to the standard—airbags that hit too low, dosages of medicines that are not suited to all, and so on. He illustrates how descriptive standards can become normative by implication, how what is considered “normal” gets accepted.

In “Age in Standards and Standards for Age: Institutionalizing Chronological Age as Biographical Necessity,” Judith Treas provides a historical overview of how chronological age “has supplanted other useful ways of thinking about age” (p. 66). She points out that there is often an imperfect match of our subjective and objective perception of age (p. 68), and that, “It does not really matter whether people know their chronological age unless they bump up against bureaucratic systems that demand chronological age (p. 81).” Even so, this construct has triumphed, and Treas provides many examples of how
today, chronological age determines the timing and progression of individual lives by invoking age norms and rules that link people to age-graded social institutions.

Martin Lengwiler revisits the notion of a standard for humans in “Double Standards: The History of Standardizing Humans in Modern Life Insurance.” He says, “the debate about insuring substandard lives serves as an exemplary revealing case to examine the ambivalent practical effects of modern human standards, between inclusive and exclusive, discriminating and privileging, and disabling and enabling practices (p. 97).” He posits the link between the cultural pessimism at the turn of the 20th Century with the notions of inherited and debilitating conditions that then define the substandard characteristics of a high-risk and, therefore, uninsurable individual. This essay also recounts the fascinating tension between the “art” of the insurance physician who made the decisions about standards based on physical examination, and the “science” of the actuarial theorist, who made these decisions based on statistical evidence.

Taking the perspective of class struggles, in “Classifying Laborers: Instinct, Property, and the Psychology of Productivity in Hungary (1920-1956),” Martha Lampland explores the topic of work science and the tension among scientific engineering, standardizing, and social classificatory practices (pp. 123-24). The essay is an examination of the belief that people of different classes, gender and ethnic groups were seen to have specific work habits in their makeup—for example, sloth or diligence and the capacity for work (p. 124). She discusses “the nexus of psychology and social engineering” (p. 127), commenting that the Hungarians were not alone in this approach. In the pursuit of increased productivity such characteristics of “human nature” were considered crucial variables by many practitioners of work science (p. 133).

In “Metadata Standards: Trajectories and Enactment in the Life of an Ontology,” Florence Millerand and Geoffrey C. Bowker use the Long-Term Ecological Research Community (LTER) and the Ecological Metadata Standard to conduct an ethnographic study of how a community enacts standards and coordinates different social worlds. They trace how distributed and disparate sites follow different trajectories in not only contributing to the metadata project but also in adjusting their infrastructure to accommodate the goal of sharing and preserving data after the paper or report is written. The challenge is “to analyze change at the scale of a continent and beyond the six-year funding cycle or the thirty-year career cycle of the scientist” (p.153). Thus, time and place become important factors in analyzing and, more importantly, evaluating the metadata standards. The authors argue that standards and ontologies should be socially and organizationally bundled and not considered merely as an afterthought to the work that produced them.

In “ASCII Imperialism,” Daniel Pargman and Jacob Palme use the development of the English-centric ASCII code to study the standardization of language and its intersection with the technical standards on the Internet (p. 181). We are quick to assume that technological imperatives guide the development of standards, but the authors argue that it is both a social and a technical issue, and while emergent consequences can’t always be anticipated, this does not absolve us of making an effort to remedy the situation. Who decides how we communicate on the Internet? Demonstrating the problem is easy—for example, the municipality of Hörsby being forced to represent itself as “www.horby.se” (village of fornication) due to ASCII limitations—but analyzing the issue is not. It isn’t until something cannot be done that we realize there is a problem, and by then we feel we are restricted by decisions that were made long ago and by the resulting inertia (p.186).

These seven guiding essays are interlaced with several shorter ones, as well as articles and illustrations, and finally a sample syllabus in case you’d like to run a seminar of your own. Here’s a sampler: Ellis Island standards for immigration, clothing sizes, healthy-infant growth charts, increasing coffin dimensions, California’s Three Strike penal standard, arsenic content in water standards, Polish pork-farm infrastructure and cleanliness standards, train-track standards and the width of two horse’s behinds, and from the vault of apocryphal EU standardization stories: the case of the straight (not curved) bananas.

One way to view the overall subtle coloring of this book is to pay attention to the metaphors. For a topic that is seemingly dry, it’s interesting to note how standards seem to evoke rather earthy and heartfelt metaphors. The prominent one is mentioned by the editors in the introductory essay. This is the metaphor of imbrications: “an evocative picture of uncremented things producing a larger whole (p. 20).” They speak of standards as nested, and throughout the book there are other structural allusions. For example, in speaking of metadata standards for shared scientific data, Millerand and Bowker point out that “[i]n the traditional model of scientific research, data are wrapped into a paper that produces a generaliz-
able truth—after which the scaffolding can be kicked away and the timeless truth can stand on its own (p.149).” They argue that, instead, the metadata can continue to be that scaffolding. In the chapter on the standard of chronological age, Teas refers to age as part of the steps of life (p.69) thereby forming a structure of the life lived in a particular shape—up and then down.

Looking at it from a more social perspective, Lampland and Star speak of our relationship with standards as a romance (p.4), invoking an image of infatuation followed (one would hope) by commitment, and then (perhaps) disenchancement, or heaven forefend, heartbreak. The sense of standards acting as a communication medium is strong throughout. We invoke the standard when we want to say, “This defines it; this is the last word; this is the way it is.” Millerand and Bowker say (p.154) that, at the very least, standards “structure the conversation.”

There are also what might be called “biological” metaphors, suggesting that standards participate in life in a peculiar way. We perceive the processes of measurement used in standards as taming “wild” phenomena (p. 21) or transforming raw data (p. 150). We see how the notion of hereditary deterioration helped shaped the concept of a substandard human being (pp. 100-01). Finally, there are the metaphors of space: compression marginalization, being within or outside of boundaries, centrality, that imply standards define more than just the physical and technical world, but in fact, have consequences for the everyday lives and activities of the humans interacting with them.

Several themes run through all the essays, articles, and illustrations; the editors have done an admirable job of presenting a conceptual description of these themes by using the analytical commonalities outlined in the first essay. In their discussion they fill in that outline with other aspects of standards: their invisibility and the implication of the fact that standards often deal with “boring things”; the intersection of standards with “messy reality;” the question of who matters in the standard process; the role of infrastructure in conceptualizing standards; and the intellectual home of standards in Science Studies.

To these I’d like to add a few more threads taken from the perspective of standards as classificatory structures. This perspective is woven tightly into many of the essays. For example, Pargman and Palme explicitly cite Geoffrey Bowker’s and Susan Leigh Star’s (1999) observation that “Classification schemes and standards literally saturate our environ-

ment” (Bowker and Star 1999, 37). My contribution aims to add some additional thoughts.

Several of the authors point out that standards, like classifications, are born within a particular point of view, for a particular purpose and with observable outcomes. Furthermore, classifications, like standards, help define, communicate and negotiate contested spaces. Modern notions of classification take into account multiple perspectives, tangled structures, and prototypicality (Kwaśnik 2000). Thus, it seems natural to talk of standards and classifications as closely linked, and there are ways of talking about classification that might usefully be extended to standards. I’ll touch on a few examples.

The first of these is warrant. Clare Beghtol, writing in 1986 said “the warrant of a classification system can be thought of as the authority a classificationist invokes first to justify and subsequently to verify decisions about what class/concepts should appear in the schedules … Warrant covers conscious or unconscious assumptions and decisions about what kinds and what units of analysis are appropriate to embody …. The semantic warrant of a system thus provides the principal authorization for supposing that some class or concept or notational device will be helpful and meaningful to classifiers and ultimately to the users of documents (p. 110-11). Warrant can derive from the scope of the collection itself, from historical and scientific consensus, from educational and mission-specific goals, and from cultural influences. In many of the discussions of standards throughout the book the term “who matters?” is invoked to discuss not only what a standard defines as “the standard” but also why that choice was made. When warrant is made explicit it can illuminate such issues.

Another notion from classification is that of expressiveness. A classification is sufficiently expressive when it has the requisite number and specificity of classes to smoothly and gracefully accommodate the phenomena within its scope. Thus a selection of two or three very general musical genres for my eclectic collection will certainly not be expressive enough. Epstein discusses how women were not considered good human subjects for medical studies because they were “too complicated” (p. 44), with hormonal cycles and other such confounding attributes. The standard was simply not expressive enough to accommodate such complexity. Indeed, many standards are created specifically to avoid complexity or to reduce it. As Dunn points out in her discussion of standards and infrastructure (p. 118), standards
tend to “gloss over” the realities on the ground. The small, poor farmer operates in conditions that do not even fall under the basic categories of the standard. Those left on the margins are excluded from the standard not only because they don’t matter, but also because it may seem to be too difficult to make the standard expressive enough.

A good classification can function as a theory (Kwaśnik 1992). That is, we can use it to describe, explain and predict (e.g., the Periodic Table of Elements). Even a flawed classification, though, has some theory or world view or set of assumptions behind it – and so it is for standards as well. It was interesting to note how many of the standards had behind them some formal set of assumptions, from the theory of deterioration (in insurance, p. 100), to human nature (in social engineering in Hungary, p. 123), to actuarial theory and reasoning with statistics. Functioning theoretically, a classification can serve as a lens into the domain it represents. Similarly, Millerand and Bowker state that metadata standards, for instance, are not neutral but can “condition access to data” (p. 154) and therefore function as a form of knowledge in themselves.

There are many other aspects of classification that seem pertinent to standards such as: flexibility, hospitality, parsimony and elegance. I think there is a connection between standards and classification because both can serve to represent, define, connect, smooth distinctions, make distinctions, and reduce to essentials. It might be fruitful, having read this book, to now examine classifications using the analytic commonalities outlined by the editors in the first essay.

Most of the time I personally appreciate standards, and am especially aware of them when they are missing. Being a cataloger (um, knowledge organizer) I do, after all, think fondly of the simultaneous ingenuity and nonsense of my AACR2. I wished, sometimes, while reading this book, to learn about some of the thorny problems that have been solved by standards—the beauty of the Pantone color chart and the clever color-numbering system on my L’Oreal hair rinse, the amusing but helpful alcohol-level indications on Finnish beer ... the list goes on. The book takes a mostly critical approach, but it is for a good purpose. I am now sensitized to the subtleties and intended and unintended consequences of not only the standards themselves, but also the standard-development process. Thus, another question that might well summarize this book, besides the one the authors posed of how people deal with standards, is what do the standards say about us? The contributing authors of this volume have illuminated a great deal but have also planted the seeds of many interesting investigations and discussions to come.

References


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practice, while dealing with practical examples of how these factors are reconciled with those of digital “editing.” Editing, and the edition, are discussed in broad context: for example, a discussion by contributors grappling with the gaps between text and code accompanies a comparison of the bounded print edition with the proposed “Open source critical edition” (one that, as the author suggests, is quite treacherously never finalized). Beyond the talk of scholarly process is an open questioning of what editions, editing, and scholarship are for, and who or what purposes they may serve. This critique is surprisingly original, and runs throughout the volume. It is significant not just to those involved in bibliographic study, but to anyone involved in producing cultural objects.

Digital humanities has become an umbrella term in the last decade, referring in many instances to the use of technology for humanists, but most notably, for engaging digital technologies for humanities scholarship. Many credit the inception of the discipline to literary study: the work of Roberto Busa (1974, 1980) an Aquinas scholar, integrated digital indexing technologies as early as 1949. Subsequent research in art history (in the 1980s), archeology (as early as 1976), classics (in the 1970s), and history (in the 1970s), integrated database technology, content analysis, and quantitative analysis into research practice and teaching methods. (Comprehensive histories this can be found in Hockey 2004, and Robinson 1997.)

The volume is ecumenical but directive, combining academic work in the humanistic disciplines with practice-centered writing. Its readings could be central to such an introductory graduate course, and in their reading, could spur discussion as to some of the central scholarly and practical questions of large scale digital projects. “Text Editing” will no doubt be useful in teaching courses in this arena. Editor Kathryn Sutherland has an impressive textual studies c.v., including the 2005 work Jane Austen’s Textual Lives: From Aeschylus to Bollywood, and an output in digital textual studies that includes 1997’s Electronic text: investigations in method and theory, and with coauthor Deegan, Transferred Illusions: Digital Technology and the Forms of Print (2009).

The work in this book can be contextualized historically in relation to two movements. First, in the work in the UK at the end of the 1970s, including the Oxford Text Archive and the Oxford Concorance Program, which exploited the capabilities of text processing in order to achieve unprecedented developments in indexing, referencing, and analyzing texts, and whose descendants have developed increasingly sophisticated scholarly editions and public programs. Second, the development and dissemination, stateside, of the Text Encoding Initiative, beginning in 1991, a language for document markup: supported by funded initiatives for TEI and in TEI instruction for Humanities scholars.

At the time of this writing, the UK, Canada, Australia, Egypt, and many countries in the European Union have rather robust national level infrastructure for the digitization of archival and manuscript materials in Libraries, Archives and Museums, and programs for integrating scholarship into the design and creation of online exhibits and editions. By contrast, the United States lacks in a central funding agency for such activities: the Library of Congress and National Archives are not “National” in the sense that they serve institutions across the country: they cannot serve the same infrastructural function. “Digital Humanities” has thus sprang forth in the U.S. as an entrepreneurial venture in which institutions and individual scholars seek funding and legitimacy for their own digitization and computing work in the neoliberal academic environment.

Without affiliations at the national level, scholars such as Johannah Drucker and Dan Cohen have emerged as hybrid scholar-managers, offering both experiential accounts of overseeing digitization programs, and academic vision for the present, if not future of digital. Despite the lack of clear work direction, U.S. institutions by the mid 2000s offer dedicated courses in digital humanities in both LIS programs and traditional humanities graduate departments. A market for suitable textbooks has emerged, in which the likely standard is Siemens, Scriebman and Unsworth’s A Companion to Digital Humanities (2005), a sizeable anthology integrating many major perspectives.

The book is divided into two sections, “In Theory” and “In Practice,” but concerns itself chiefly with the conceptual aspects of digital text projects. While there is not a chapter on, for instance, choosing and implementing metadata standards, there is thoughtful discussion as to how they may be conceived in terms of project planning. The editors have achieved an admirable balance in terms of practical concern and scholarly analysis.

In the first section, topics of bibliographic theory and textual criticism are discussed in the context of the contemporary online environment. The textual scholar (and volume editor) Kathryn Deegan’s essay
attempts to trace the trajectory of textual criticism up to the present, reconciling, if not reimaging the focus of textual criticism to the work of interface design. Swedish LIS scholar Mats Dahlstrom's essay, “The Compleat Edition,” addresses the economic and production factors of the electronic scholarly text while framing the questions of editioning within a user-oriented context. Paul Eggert, an English professor at New South Wales, takes inventory of the process of making a scholarly edition, weighing the process in the digital realm against that in a print publication sense. The essay from Gabriel Bodard and Juan Garces, (from Reading and the British Library, respectively), uses the experience of engineering a critical edition to argue for “Open Source Critical Editions”, a stance unsurprisingly zeitgeist, but one that is challenging, if not contradictory, to the traditions of scholarly process outlined in the volume.

In the second section of the book, case studies of digital projects are presented with mind to the pragmatic aspects of their execution. However, these essays are thoughtful and timely, not merely the “how we did it” stuff of professional publications. In many respects, the essays in this section of the volume provide a gateway to a more advanced critical understanding of digitization’s possibilities.

One key example of how this volume elegantly brings themes of practice into a scholarly perspective is the essay “Editions and Archives.” In the context of their work, James Mussel and Suzanne Paylor, literary scholars who held positions on the Nineteenth Century Serials Edition, provide a fascinating and thorough account of the challenges faced by the project. They ruminate on the changing and variable nature of serial printing during the latter half of the nineteenth century. As print genres emerged and evolved, (e.g. the daily newspaper and the “tabloid”) the discourse of these formats shaped readers notions of their importance and permanence. The authors survey scholars' differing notions of “ephemeral” literature, and contemplate how to capture this online.

These essays mentioned each address a heart of the matter in digital humanities: a competing interest between access and authority, and a somewhat unifying effort to translate the erudition and process of the past few centuries of academic discourse, all the while discarding some of the more cumbersome aspects of scholarly communication. What's hinted at, if not directly addressed is the more mundane problem of labor duplication between the scholars of the humanities and the custodians of cultural objects, i.e., librarians, archivists, and curators. The perspectives in the volume generally reflect on thoughtful collaboration, but also a reconciliation of these factors. As said previously, this is a conceptual working-through, not a program-setting book- solutions for funding collaborative work environments are not touched on.

Funding in general is not addressed in the volume. As the contributors hail largely from the UK and the European continent, it is noted that funding, along with standards and procedure, has come from governmental sources. For the U.S. based researcher, this raises questions of the feasibility of large-scale digital projects without central funding sources. Without central guidelines as to standards, and without much investment in cyberinfrastructure for humanities resources, how can a larger network of digital humanities form to serve present users and build collections for future ones? There are very real issues of digital preservation and migration posed by even the most well-planned digital project, and any long-term strategy has to involve a larger effort in this area.

The implicit elements in this volume are those that may be the most revealing to those interested in knowledge organization- institutionalization and infrastructure. Most, if not all of the contributions to the volume reflect the experience of government-funded projects carried out with strategic support of large scale initiatives. The summative effect of this volume is an argument towards this sort of structural planning, and is one that researchers in the US are largely without answers to, and ones to which Knowledge Organization scholars are keen to take interest.

2.0 Markup: libraries, collections, and bibliography

Espen Ore of the National Library of Norway begins his essay “They hid their books underground,” with an account of the Library of Alexandria.

In retracing this ancient relationship between textual scholarship and the organization of knowledge, Ore points to a key issue for the development of textual resources. As work goes forth in digital projects, how is “markup” developed and expounded upon? This is a central consideration of those exploring Web 2.0 tools in collection design: building an open record of archival research.

The relationship between scholarship and custody is a tendentious one in special collections. Archivists and librarians seek to “serve” their researchers, all the while governing access to materials. Directors of lar-
ge special collections libraries are in many cases PhDs in the humanities, and provide oversight in terms of collecting, scholarly value, and academic administration. They have not, historically, been involved in the description, arrangement, or organization of collections. They do not answer reference questions. For academics, with cursory training of the mechanics of digitization, without insight or experience into the maintenance of collections, to engage in and take ownership of collection curation, is to signal a massive shift in the labor structure of libraries and archives. And to state the obvious, librarians are largely female, archivists are less so, but women are still predominant in the profession. The ranks of institutional directors are largely male, as are those of the digital humanists.

It’s worth noting that rare book librarianship has occupied a unique niche in the scholarly tradition of library science, and one not instantly translated to the current streams of information science study. In the mid to late twentieth century, rare book scholarship drew upon a sort of literary scholarship concerned with the condition of the text, and a bibliographic method that sought to quantify the existence of artifacts. Unlike classification, rare book librarianship concerns itself with time and environment, rather than use and totality. The business of rare books and manuscripts is a key part of the practical handling of such materials, and is thus socially and intellectually rooted in the discipline. Rare book collecting is a gentlemanly hobby, and to tend to the collections of extraordinary monetary, as well as historical and cultural value, requires at least some adherence to norms of use and ownership.

The rare books and archival communities have respectively complex relationships with description and conceptions of classification. Longtime holdouts on standardization, MARC cataloging standards have been seen in the rare books community as inadequate, and to the archives community, completely inappropriate. Within factions of archivists, description standards are held with varying degrees of contempt. Until the 1980s, many collections of literary manuscripts eschewed the standard finding aids and catalog records for intricate in-house protocol for describing materials, often a page at a time. The National Union Catalog of Manuscript Collections, a decades-long effort to centralize collections listings, could be considered a failure by most current standards. By the turn of the millennium, leaders in the field issued grave warnings on “Hidden Collections,” an attempt to address that most repositories had anywhere from a quarter to a half of their holdings without comprehensive collection records and were basically hidden outside of institutional walls.

The situation as described could be read, especially by those outside these communities, as an indictment of how behind the times rare book librarians and archivists are. But an alternate reading can yield a potent critique of standards adaption, and perhaps one that can lend us a better understanding of how collections can be facilitated and audiences served in both physical and digital environments. For example, the emphasis on procedure in special collections is far stronger than that in other library environments, and in many ways, in-person service is seen as an integral part of access to the collection; in this situation, this guidance is seen as surpassing, if not altogether eclipsing the collection’s textual record. The complex semiotics of the special collections reading room can be endlessly unpacked, yielding a rich testament to the academic, social and public contexts of archival collections and rare books.

It is a common refrain amongst those in the special collections community that faculty and the public demand that collections be put online, without regard to the management and maintenance of digital collections, and without a clue towards this intricate history and the context. Without acknowledging the complex dynamics of the administration and access to materials, digital humanities forsakes addressing a large stumbling block to the sort of democratic digital future it proposes: creating it in a just, efficient, and thoughtful way.

What is necessary for the future of digital scholarship, and digital collections, is a new strain of institutional leadership. Scholars interested in curating digital collections must engage with not only the “tools” of the web, but the goals of maintaining the artifacts they create. Together with LAM professionals, faculty must strive to integrate not only the use of collections, but work of designing and maintaining them into their teaching. By making pathways towards holistic operations of building, maintaining, and supporting collections, those at the crossroads of digital collections have an opportunity to re-envision the process of description and access.

3.0 What is the role of knowledge organization?

As a final point, I would like to examine how the field of knowledge organization may engage with this juncture of activity. For the readers of this journal, the question resulting from this work seems to
be, “What is the significance of digital texts, and what role, if any, does knowledge organization play in their development?” Digital library, or digital humanities projects do not serve as straightforward examples of classification work, and the traditional practical effects of knowledge organization teaching-cataloging, indexing, and other descriptive activities, are rarely represented in digital projects in their traditional forms. In the case of such as EXAMPLE, the work is done not by librarians at all, but by academics in a new venture. But surely the intersection of knowledge resources with scholarly work is a natural entre for knowledge organization.

We may draw on the work of the digital humanities movement, and their contention that the experience of putting a collection online is one of individual scholarly engagement, and not exclusively the domain of institutional work. Such an assertion takes a radically different stance towards order and information design than the one we tend to use in knowledge organization. But by elevating the process of gathering and presenting materials, and by illuminating the decision-making behind making collections available online, we may be able to expand our knowledge of this aspect of KO practice.

This is not a huge tactical leap. Scholars such as Claire Beghtol and Barbara Kwasnik have worked on domain-specific knowledge organization, providing analyses of how those domain-cultivated perspectives, scholarly or otherwise, contributes in conceptualization of form and function in KO systems. Their research is invaluable in these situations, as the firsthand observations of digital humanists, as in this volume, as to the construction of online text environments can illustrate and validate many of their claims.

Digital humanities, as it stands, lacks the perspective lent by LIS’ development of “the user” as a design aspect and as a rhetorical entry. While much ink is spilled as to scholarly working standards in this volume, not much consideration is paid to ramifications of design for users without regard to presumptions of disciplinary mindset. This is not to say that disciplinary concerns are not user concerns, but rather that a scholarly perspective could critique and enhance our notions of user publics. A more thorough understanding of concepts such as authenticity from a user standpoint would, in fact, illuminate studies such as this. Conversely, facilities of search, retrieval, or user features are not explored in the tactical essays in this volume, and their implications are not considered in the critical essays. To this reader, this is a serious oversight, one to which leaves the community involved in such projects-without tools to engage with their environments.

In order to determine what may be the role for knowledge organization (and other) scholarship in this area, it is first necessary to examine the aims and means of digital projects such as those involved in this book. The cases detailed in the volume are efforts to do the work of libraries and universities in public online arenas. In another direction, these are first attempts to arrange infrastructure for literary scholarship, presumably for future iterations of it. In a sense, the questions raised by these essays are the questions which permeate much of the literature of information science realms, and questions by which knowledge organization specialists are especially qualified to discuss. Knowledge organization, with its critical mastery of form, representation, subject, and access, holds a range of nuanced perspectives especially relevant to the development of digital text environments.

Recent popular works such as David Weinberger’s Everything is Miscellaneous and Clay Shirky’s Here comes everybody, have engaged the KO community in recent years. But KO stands to gain more from engaging with humanities scholarship at the emerging digital crossroads. KO stands to fill a substantial role in this environment. The volume reviewed is not a pop-scholarship work on the grand textual revolution, but rather a careful gathering of what can be accounted for in the realm of textual interfaces, based on the experiences and proximity of the scholars to such projects. By analyzing relationships between documents, labor, and users, we stand to witness some substantial paradigm shifts. Drawing on our critiques, we may develop schemes for streamlining processes, integrating specific sorts of knowledge, and fully engaging the scholarly process. We may have a hand in reimagining the description and maintenance of unique materials, and in forging new partnerships for our work.

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