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Information Resource Description: Creating and Managing Metadata

by Philip Hider. Chicago, Illinois: ALA Neal Schuman, 2018, 277 pp., ISBN: 978-0-8389-1836-4, \$85.99.

Simultaneously published: London, UK: Facet Publishing.

In this second edition of his 2012 work, Hider provides a comprehensive description of the history and practice of metadata and information resource description. Hider's writing is clear, fluent and at times humorous. This book provides an excellent survey of the subject for beginners and provides both a refresher and deep insights for those already acquainted with the basics.

Hider is head of the School of Information Studies at Charles Sturt University in Australia.

The book is organized with a clear table of contents that logically walks the reader from 'Definitions and scope' through metadata sources, standards and quality, and finally ends with Hider's thoughts on the future of metadata. Following the 'Further reading' section there are some lists of metadata standards and a comprehensive index.

While this book is explicitly aimed at more than just librarians—its audience is also people who work with metadata in museums and other cultural institutions—as a librarian, I did feel as though this book was primarily aimed

at me. I am not able to judge whether metadata professionals in other disciplines would prefer to have a book more focused on their specialty. Both prefaces—to the first and second editions—were useful in contextualizing the scope of the book. Hider states that “The approach [of the text] is descriptive and explanatory... the book is not a manual” (page XIV). This is a useful injunction, and Hider’s thoughtful and perceptive consideration of the subject throughout the book bears this out. The author’s is a voice that could use amplification as the field undergoes a period of retrenchment and re-evaluation. Hider’s examples are consistently useful, clarify the issue, and introduce a humorous aspect to the subject. I didn’t think I would be reading about the classification of custard apple berries or of vacuum cleaners, but they help to illustrate the variety of applications of metadata.

I found two weaknesses of this book: the first comes from my view of the profession; the second may be an artifact of this being a second edition of a relatively recent (and presumably fairly successful) book. While Hider did a good job of managing the amount of space dedicated to cataloging history, it still feels out of place to be reading about managing space on catalog cards in a book aimed at metadata practitioners in the year 2019. While it is important to understand how metadata practices have evolved, it is perhaps more important to ensure that the profession is a forward-looking one. My second quibble is that the updating could have been more comprehensive. For a couple of examples, Hider’s discussion of federated discovery systems

mentions “Primo from Ex Libris, Summon from ProQuest” with no recognition that Proquest acquired Ex Libris in 2015, or any changes in the field that resulted from this (page 58); Figure 6.1 (page 114) chronicling the growth of OCLC’s WorldCat database hasn’t been updated along with the text, and only charts the growth from 1998-2012.

However, these are minor quibbles compared to the timeliness of other sections. Hider’s description of the FRBR models as they relate to ongoing developments in cataloging standards is one of the clearest and most reasonable that I’ve seen. Here, Hider does not suffer from a failure to update. This section was remarkably current—his discussion of *nomens* is very much part of the ongoing conversation, even though he doesn’t explicitly mention the 3R project. Hider brings up many of the same points that are still issues with that project: he dryly notes that “the development of RDA was a somewhat protracted process” (page 142).

As a cataloging and metadata librarian of almost a decade, I found much in this monograph that was interesting, new to me, and worth knowing. While this book would be a good introduction to the subject for students or new professionals, it is equally useful for established librarians who have the background knowledge that allows them to build on and contextualize that information with Hider’s historical and theoretical sections.

