Survival of the Fittest: The Evolving Nature of Metadata Creation for Digital Collections

The evolving nature of metadata is exemplified through a pictorial timeline that expands over a decade, identifying the development of the University of Nevada, Las Vegas Libraries digital collections, the context of their development, and the various factors that emerged later on that have influenced revisions of metadata decisions.

Lessons Learned

- Once the metadata record is created it does not remain unchanged; metadata is dynamic!
- Practical experience demonstrates that designing and implementing digital collections is a learning process
- A common approach is to learn by doing
- Deep knowledge about the collection is often acquired as the digitization project develops
- Given the diversity of the material in digital collections, it is difficult yet necessary to take on the role of expert
- Metadata element sets evolve in a way to capture the peculiarities of unique materials, the needs of users, or technological trends (such as linked data)
- The learning process in each individual digital collection might have some implications for previously developed collections as well as for designing future collections
- Other factors such as improvement of cross-collection searches or the need for compliance to various consortia standards might also influence decisions to revise legacy collections