

Exposing missing links: from CONTENTdm digital collections metadata to the Linked Data cloud

Digital collections contain rich metadata describing digital objects. Data (or metadata) are encapsulated in these records and are only accessible to users when records containing them are retrieved in a search. This approach for managing data, although a common practice that extends far beyond digital collections, creates silos of data. Data associated with records is isolated and does not directly link to related data existing in other records. These silos hide valuable relationships among data, leaving to users the task of discovering these hidden connections. A more granular (and far more powerful) approach to managing data is provided by the semantic web platform, linked data. It allows for creation of explicit and qualified links among data. In this approach there are no records, only data. Data is stored as triples (subject, predicate and object) using technologies that adopt the Resource Description Framework (RDF) model. The linked data movement has created a Linked Data Cloud where data can be generated locally and linked to existing data accessible globally in the cloud. At UNLV we have designed and initiated a pilot project to apply linked data concepts to the practical task of transforming CONTENTdm digital collections metadata into linked data. This presentation is focused on the practical aspects of the task of transforming digital collections metadata into linked data conveyed through examples of our experience so far. Note that although our primary work has been on converting digital collections metadata, we believe that our approach can be easily transferred to other types of repositories.