The principal affordance of publishing texts online: Possible implications for the bibliographic universe model and classification

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BRIEF ABSTRACT

In this presentation, I argue for focusing the attention of classification theorists on the implications of what I argue to be the principal affordance of publishing texts online, in contrast to their publication on paper, and that is the capability for an author or creator to update an online text without the text having to be republished as a new physical edition. This affordance is a result of the possibilities provided for by a shift in the materiality of textual carrier from physical to digital. I examine the implications of this capability for the WEMI model and argue that its starting point in terms of online "things" in the bibliographic universe should be modeled more granularly.

Keywords

Textual transmission, networked publishing, WEMI.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

During this lightning talk, I present a case for focusing the attention of classification theorists on the implications of what I argue to be the principal affordance of publishing texts online, in contrast to their publication on paper, and that is the capability for an author or creator to update an online text without the text having to be republished as a new physical edition. This affordance is a result of the possibilities provided for by a shift in the materiality of textual carrier from physical to digital. This research follows Tennis (2011), who suggests the Work-Text-Artifact axis as one basis for organizing studies pertaining to the new environment where "the concept of edition, impression, issue, or state dissolves in the wiki, or is at least transformed." My analysis of the work-text-artifact axis within this new environment centers on the role of classification in the context of the need for supporting textual transmission, reception, and use when texts are published online.

The principal context for this presentation will be based on augmenting the concept of "bibliographic universe," a concept that addresses the fundamental question: what is it that we are we organizing and what relationships exist among them? Development of the bibliographic universe concept as a fundamental bibliographical modeling tool has been led by Barbara Tillett (2008). Tillet's work has recently reached a culminating point by way of its deployment as a major conceptual basis for the Resource Description and Access (RDA) standard, which incorporates the WEMI model (Work-Expression-Manifestation-Item) based on the concept of the bibliographic universe. I argue that the WEMI model's starting point in terms of online "things" in the bibliographic universe should be modeled more granularly in light of a consideration of the principal affordance of texts published online. I also argue the importance of classification in this context.

This research is part of a series on the nature of networked publishing and its impact on textual transmission and knowledge organization online (MacCall, 2011, 2012).

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