



# Using Metadata Skills for a Course Inventory

Lee Richardson  
Health Sciences Library  
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

ALA Annual Conference  
June 28, 2015

# Background

- Cataloging and Metadata Coordinator for seven years
- More and more need for non-MARC metadata and information organization
  - Consultations inside and outside library
  - Organizing and tagging blog content
  - Data management
  - Controlled vocabularies
  - Search Engine Optimization
  - LibGuides organization
- Changed my title to Information Discovery and Metadata Librarian
  - Focus on non-cataloging activities for one year and see how it goes

# Health Affairs Collaborative (HAC)

- Allied Health
  - Dentistry
  - Medicine
  - Nursing
  - Pharmacy
  - Public Health
  - Others
- 
- Health Sciences Library - We can help!

# Interprofessional Education (IPE)

- “... occasions when students from two or more professions in health and social care learn together during all or part of their professional training with the object of cultivating collaborative practice for providing client- or patient-centered health care.”

Wikipedia

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Interprofessional\\_education](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Interprofessional_education)

# Who's Doing What?

- Hard for each school to know what each other is doing
- Information is scattered
- Bring everything together in an inventory
- Focus is on courses but also want to include workshops, internships, non-research grants – all IPE activities
- Also want students and advisors to be able to see IPE opportunities across Health Affairs

# What's Been Done So Far

- HAC made a brief spreadsheet
- First consultation with representative from Nursing
- Examined UNC and other university course catalogs to get ideas of what we might want to include
- Made a long list of possible data elements
- Consulted with Nursing again
- Research to see if this or something similar had already been done

# Database?

- How to design a database
  - Books and online tutorials
- How to use Microsoft Access
  - Books and online tutorials
  - HAC has Access
  - Lots of resources to learn and help when there's a problem
- Build our own database
  - Fewer resources when there's a problem

# Organizing the Data

- Consulted syllabi and UNC course catalog for possible data fields labels
  - Use consistent language and familiar language
- Identified which fields could have multiple values or would have a single value
- Listed all possible values for fields with multiple values
- Which fields could have yes/no
- Identified fields that might be in separate tables
- Created data models

# Data Dictionary

- Defined each field
  - Ensure different disciplines all have the same understanding
  - Sparked ideas about other data to include
- Helped organize data and think through some issues
  - Authority control – personal names and department names
  - Consistency – Course title and description always the same as syllabus
- Experience with data dictionaries for digital projects was helpful

# HSL Database Developer

- Asked good questions
- Challenged my assumptions
- Helped with data modeling
- Conclusion – I had not done enough research and information gathering
  - Go back and clearly define HAC needs
  - Thoroughly document questions and queries HAC wants to answer with this data

# Next

- Meet with the HAC to clearly define their needs
- Meet with a representative of each school to make sure their unique needs are included
- Consult with HSL database developer
  - More information gathering?
  - Are we ready to talk about systems? (Database or spreadsheet or Drupal or ?)
- Talk with other universities – what are they doing?

# Mistakes Made

- Assumed we would build a database
- Assumed I knew more than I did about databases
  - No experience with database design and data modeling
- Assumed I could fairly easily learn what I needed to know about databases
- Didn't consult with HSL database developer early enough or often enough
- Got too far ahead – didn't spend enough time interviewing and clearly defining needs – CRITICAL STEP

# Cataloging/Metadata Skills

- Search
- Controlled vocabularies
- Consistent terminology aids search and queries
  - Also think about in course descriptions and syllabi
- Terminology for field labels
- Keywords (tags) – consulted taxonomies and IPE literature for common terms
- Fixed fields vs codes vs free text
- Organizing information
- Data dictionary

# Other Decisions

- Who's going to enter and maintain the data?
  - I can help get it started – not ongoing
- How many people will need to enter and edit data vs just viewing the data?
- If students need to access this information, does there need to be a public interface?
- Where will this information live? Is there a shared location easily accessible by all Health Affairs?
- If HSL builds a database, will we be responsible for ongoing maintenance? Can we turn it over to someone else?
- HAC is hiring a coordinator. What role could/should this position play?
- SharePoint is coming to UNC soonish. If that's a good option, how many resources do we want to invest in building a database now?

# In Conclusion

- Cataloging/Metadata skills useful in other contexts
  - Look for opportunities outside of cataloging and digital projects
- My focus on Health Affairs but could be adapted to other disciplines
  - Would be great to have this campus-wide – easier to identify possibilities for collaboration



Lee Richardson  
Information Discovery and Metadata Librarian  
Health Sciences Library  
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

[richarlm@email.unc.edu](mailto:richarlm@email.unc.edu)