

Metadata for Digital Collections:

A How-To-Do-It Manual®

Steven J. Miller

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Foreword

Back in the dark ages of the last decade, when first talking to publishers about putting together my own contribution to the metadata canon, it was suggested to me that I write more of a how-to book, but I demurred, largely because of the enormous effort required. As it happens, I broke my right arm early in the process of creating *Metadata in Practice*, so it's just as well that my actual writing effort was somewhat limited, as I could do the recruiting of contributors (and the inevitable herding) by telephone.

With that as background, I was really happy to hear that Steve was writing the book I hadn't the fortitude to attempt back then, and particularly pleased that he's done such a nice job of it. The metadata community needs this book—at all levels, from the beginner to the practitioner to the teacher. As it is, when those of us who teach about metadata these days go about gathering material, it's something of a treasure hunt, and each discovered resource needs to be presented with a map of where it fits in the pantheon, a bunch of caveats about age and suitability for particular purposes, and apologies for the fact that there is not a single resource that covers it all. Steve has relieved us of all that, for which we are very, very grateful. He's also included in the book the kinds of pointers to the important work of others that expands on his more comprehensive approach.

The other great news about this book is that Steve has been paying close attention to the Semantic Web, and he understands well that though we may be building our metadata using current technology we *must* pay attention to where our world is shifting. I predict that in the future we will look upon that shift as the most important change in our corner of the profession since Henriette Avram started thinking about automating the printing of catalog cards. Steve's approach—sensible and accessible to his audience—is to include that information in the relevant beginning portions and as a separate chapter. The reality is that we are on a moving sidewalk of transition that will be a part of our lives for most of (if not all of) our careers.

There is no shortcut—no one-size-fits-all template—available to us as we plan today for a tomorrow that will be rife with change, not all of which we can predict. But readers of this book will be as prepared as

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it is possible to be for whatever the future hands us. Thanks, Steve;
we're in your debt.

*Diane I. Hillmann
Director of Metadata Initiatives
Information Institute of Syracuse
Syracuse, New York;
Partner
Metadata Management Associates*