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# Book Reviews

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***Making the Most of Your ILS: A User's Guide to Evaluating and Optimizing Library Systems.*** By Lynn E. Gates and Joel D. Tonyan. Santa Barbara, CA: Libraries Unlimited, 2023. 148p. \$55.00 softcover (ISBN 978-1-4408-7637-0); \$49.50 ebook (ISBN 978-1-4408-7638-7).

The integrated library system (ILS) is the backbone of the modern library. It maintains and manages the collection's inventory and facilitates discovery and lending of materials. With time, even well designed and configured systems can develop pain points that frustrate both the workers and patrons using these programs. Libraries may not be able to consider a new solution like a newer library services platform (LSP), so an ILS needs to be analyzed over time to ensure that it continues to perform in a reliable and efficient manner.

Lynn E. Gates and Joel D. Tonyan, both currently serving at the University of Colorado as the director of collections and content and the director of user experience respectively, intend their book “for anyone who is frustrated with their ILS (or a portion of it) but isn't ready or willing to migrate” (viii). The authors were recent hires at the Kraemer Family Library who had limited experience with their inherited ILS—in this case, Innovative Interfaces Inc.'s Sierra. They were trying to understand how the new to them system worked and capture how it had been configured in the past to identify potential areas for improvement and enhancement to support the implementation of new policies. The goal was not migration, but rather how to fine tune and optimize an existing system. This work became the basis of their book which shares the authors' approach via seven chapters covering the planning and gathering of support for an ILS improvement project, the ILS structure, system security and its importance, working with field values, updating workflows, and documentation. The book positions itself as a practical guide in assessing and identifying opportunities for improvement. The authors supplement their discussion with case studies based on their work at the Kraemer Family Library, providing concrete examples of concepts explained throughout the chapters. These illustrative case studies contextualize the work involved in each step of the ILS optimization process for the readers following along. Those reading the book will see how the earlier stages of work and analysis impact later decisions and system changes as they progress through the book. The concluding chapter is a capstone case study for eliminating overdue fees at Kraemer Library, which was the impetus that launched the ILS improvement project. Even though this work can be read in its entirety, the chapters can be reviewed individually.

The approach is ILS-agnostic. While the authors do share their library specific examples and case studies, the discussion and process are broad enough to be transferable to other institutions and systems. Not only does the book discuss the essentials of dealing with the systems and workflows, but it also acknowledges the soft skills necessary for getting the requisite buy-in at all levels. The chapter on system security provides a straightforward overview of the concerns and issues involved in protecting an ILS configuration as well as patron privacy. It lays out the differences between locally versus remotely hosted systems and the different security options available. Additionally, the authors present the principles of system security and staff permissions. This chapter provides an excellent summary on the system security, which is something most librarians are aware of, but may not have an idea of all the underlying mechanisms and processes. Another area of note is the approach used to document information about the ILS and its configurations. It proposes options on how to preserve this crucial institutional knowledge that is often held by colleagues and is at risk of being lost should they decide to move on or retire from their positions. The authors shared what information they found most important to document and shared what types of documentation are least helpful. They laid out useful best practices for documentation review as well as ongoing maintenance strategy and recommended tools and solutions that can be used to manage this work.

The authors also provided various appendices, which include glossaries and worksheet templates. These worksheets were used to review various aspects of the ILS, like diagramming ILS inputs and outputs, system security audits, secure password policies, workflow mapping, and MARC field values analysis. These supplemental sections would be useful to anyone interested in undertaking an ILS improvement project or who want to document their ILS configuration and would like a guide to start their own work.

Overall, this book would be good introduction to the basics of the ILS—understanding all the internal and external relationships and services that are required to maintain this crucial piece of technology working at its best. The text illustrates how the systems work together in an uncomplicated way. While it does not delve deep into all the mechanics

of an ILS and does not directly cover issues related to LSPs and discovery layers, it does highlight the key aspects and connections that would be ideal candidates for optimization. This book can guide those who would like to plan a similar ILS improvement project and are not sure where to start. It offers a practical common-sense approach to identifying and potentially resolving ILS issues. It helps readers define

the problem and lays out the necessary considerations that should be reviewed. While not exhaustive, even experienced librarians may benefit from the process methodology and documentation practices. It would be a good starting point for any ILS analysis project.—*Elisa Nascimento (elisa.nascimento@yale.edu), Yale University Library, New Haven, Connecticut*

***Taxonomies: Practical Approaches to Developing and Managing Vocabularies for Digital Information.*** Edited by Helen Lippell. London: Facet Publishing, 2022. 258 pgs. \$81.99 softcover (ISBN: 978-1-78330-481-3).

The importance of taxonomies has been visible in recent years, whether it is with organizations that oversee describing communities of people or how to sell on the importance of taxonomies to the stakeholders of a company. There have been conversations within the Library of Congress on whether to change the search terms defining marginalized groups; universities are dealing with similar issues when they are faced with students questioning why a book has been categorized or shelved in a certain way; and if someone is trying to start a business that involves helping people with their travel needs, they need to consider who their targeted audience is, what terms that audience would be using and tailor the business model to suit those needs for prime optimization. These are just some of the examples of how taxonomies can help organizations and it is important to be able to identify and show this potential to colleagues and stakeholders.

Taxonomies are not only for e-commerce but also for marketing, technical documentation, and even matchmaking; they are the support for “both search[ing] and brows[ing] for information retrieval in addition to enabling consistent tagging” (xxi). Taxonomies are especially important to the success of an organization because of how the vocabularies work in enhancing the ability of the digital information to reach the user; it is increasingly seen as important to the necessary stakeholders, from taxonomy project managers to owners to any other digital asset managers, data scientists, etc.

Editor Helen Lippell is a taxonomy consultant with over fifteen years’ experience; the companies she has collaborated with include the BBC, the Department for International Trade, and the Metropolitan Police. Her objective with the book is to provide a useful resource for the reader at any level. She collaborates with eighteen other contributors responsible for the subsequent chapters. They include professional taxonomy consultants, librarians, career and information consultants, and others. The book is divided into four sections and includes figures and tables, notes, four appendices, as well as a glossary and index.

The first part of the book is titled “Getting Started” and covers business buy-in and scoping in addition to choosing the appropriate software. Readers are told to “ensure you

can quickly explain the goals of the project in a meaningful way to stakeholders . . . your first sentence should explain what you are doing and why” (7). Stakeholders do not always understand the importance of investing in taxonomy, and it should be part of the goal to impress on them the need for a taxonomy plan. Readers are also cautioned to remember that no two taxonomies are the same and that there is no single best choice when it comes to any taxonomy tool.

Part 2 is entitled “Building Taxonomies” and it covers structure and scaling; learning about respect for culture and how to avoid bias; relationships; testing and validation of the taxonomies; interoperability; and everything that can go wrong. Chapter 4, “The Diversity of Terms,” is particularly relevant. There is an ongoing conversation about respecting cultures and being sensitive about what terms are used to describe these groups. An awareness of personal bias is also important to have because that could influence decision making in this regard. The author of that chapter, Bharat Dayal Sharma, stressed that organizations should not assume anything about who they are describing but that more importantly, “we should be adaptable and open to feedback about what terms we use” (63). Chapter 7 on interoperability is about ensuring metadata can be shared across databases and organizations. It is useful to remember that “when metadata terms differ between systems, extra work is required to make sure any data that is imported from one system to another ends up in the proper metadata field” (100).

Part 3, “Applications,” deals with enterprise search, digital asset management, powering structured content, and information architecture and e-commerce. It stresses the importance of the metadata associated with the object. Most of the chapters are read in a typical fashion but chapter 10 reads more like a conversation between the editor and the two contributors. It stresses that the reader needs to always be thinking about the future and how to keep the taxonomies useful now and in the future. Questions to ask include whether the content is intuitive? Will it be adaptable and scalable? Will another user be able to understand it if you are not present to answer questions?

Business adoption is the topic of part 4. Readers should