Future information environments: deserts, jungles or parks?

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Presented at Archives, Libraries, Museums 10 (AKM10), Porec, Croatia, 2006
Information environment

✧ From AKM9:
✧ “A common information environment offers easy, convenient access to the widest range of information resources catering for the widest range of needs of the widest range of users
✧ It requires the collaboration of archives, libraries, museums and governments”
Landscaping

✧ Identifies collections of resources likely to meet an enquirer’s information needs
  ✧ In the common information environment of archives, libraries, museums, …
✧ Identifies item-level finding-aids for those collections
  ✧ Cross-searchable or separate
Ideal landscaping service

✧ Is transparent to the enquirer
✧ Enquirer inputs what they are interested in
   ✧ Person, organisation, place, event, subject
✧ Service outputs information about relevant resources
   ✧ What items, where they are located, when they can be accessed, how they can be used
Deserts

- Metadata for collections or items is
  - Incomplete and inconsistent
  - Out-of-date and unreliable
  - Difficult to find and use
  - Sparse, scattered, disconnected
The Old 5-star Information Mine

There?  
Here?  
Over here?  
Or is it here?  
Try digging here
Jungles

 Metadata is:
  ✷ Inconsistent
  ✷ Duplicated many times over
  ✷ In multiple versions and formats
  ✷ Produced by commercial and political groups as well as cultural organisations
  ✷ Circuitous to use
  ✷ Dense, undifferentiated
The Elixir of Universal Answers

Is in here!

Somewhere ...
Parks

Metadata is:

- Consistent, coherent and complete
- Rich enough to be used flexibly
- Contextualised, appropriate, and relevant
- Clear, distinguishable
The well-professed garden

Look here

And here

And here

Please explore – all paths are signposted
Some gardening tools

✧ Authoritative headings
  ✧ Metadata at all levels of granularity using consistent and coherent labels for referencing “cultural” objects
  ✧ People, organisations, places, events, themes, topics
✧ Quality control and metadata workflows
  ✧ Currency and completeness
  ✧ Versions and duplicates
✧ Full-text indexing and “smart” tagging
  ✧ Digital/digitised texts
    ✧ Not just primary information resources
    ✧ Secondary (abstracts, summaries, indexes)
    ✧ Tertiary (directories)
A future information environment

✧ Scene: I’ve just been visiting Edinburgh Castle
✧ And I’m walking down the High Street towards Holyrood Palace
✧ With my i-PIE
  ✧ (Personal Information Environment)
  ✧ Portable media tablet/phone/camera
  ✧ Connected to free city-wide wi-fi
  ✧ Knows where I am (gps)
  ✧ And what I’m interested in (pre-set by me)
✧ When it buzzes …
On your left < is the site of the Robert Burns house, marked by a plaque.

In a house on the east side of this close Robert Burns lived during his first visit to Edinburgh 1756.

This building
The house
Closes
Burns’ visit
Edinburgh in 1756

Within 1000 m
Burns manuscript exhibition
Edinburgh Room
Farming in 18th C Scotland
Excise records of Robert Burns

National Library of Scotland
Edinburgh Central Library
National Museum of Scotland
National Archives of Scotland
Thank you

✧ With fingers crossed that some of this will happen!
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